

Namaste!

Welcome to the February 2005 edition of Namaste News!

Definitely an amazing month of two halves on expedition...!

Firstly, the successful ascent of beautiful Cerro Aconcagua, the highest mountain in South America and western hemisphere at 6,962m (22,832 ft).

Secondly, a luxurious tour of the wine region of central Argentina before dipping into the

wonderful world of northern Patagonia.

Through the arid and thermal Aracuania region of Argentina, then into the northern Chilean Lake District, the expedition explored volcanoes, lakes, forests and other incredible landscapes before finishing at the delightful natural hot springs of San Sebastian.

Feel free to send me an email with your suggestions and ideas for future issues.

Cheers, Chris

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Global Expedition Highlights

1/2/05 Day 303
Mendoza Mile 31350



3/2/05 Day 305
Penitentes Mile 31531



6/2/05 Day 308
Aconcagua Mile 31531



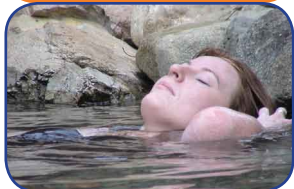
8/2/05 Day 310
Aconcagua Mile 31531



10/2/05 Day 312
Aconcagua Mile 31531



28/2/05 Day 330
Sebastian Termas Mile 32852



12/2/05 Day 314
Aconcagua Mile 31531



27/2/05 Day 329
Laguna Colica Mile 32822



15/2/05 Day 317
Horcon Mile 31622



26/2/05 Day 328
Paso Pino Hurchado Mile 32709



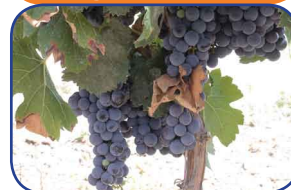
24/2/05 Day 326
Malargue Mile 32360



22/2/05 Day 324
Tunuyan Mile 32052



20/2/05 Day 322
Santiago Mile 31776



17/2/05 Day 319
Laguna Verde Mile 31672



Expedition Trivia...

- # of Days (overall): 28 (330)
- Miles in month (overall): 1782 (32852)
- Avg miles/day (overall): 61 (100)
- Longest day (overall): 229 (527)
- # countries (overall): 2 (15)
- # of police stops (overall): 16 (88)

Top Tips this month...

- Top Tip: Sebastian Termas, Chile
- Favourite City: Mendoza, Argentina
- Adventure Spot: Aconcagua, Argentina
- Place to Stay: Laguna Colica, Chile
- Night Spot: Zur, Mendoza
- Wilderness: Patagonia Andes

Features...

On page 3, read more about the successful 2005 Namaste Aconcagua Expedition with all 5 climbers happily reaching the summit of South America's highest mountain at 6,962m. There is also a link to the full expedition report.

On page 4, find out about Vaughn's experiences on expedition in Patagonia...

Global Expedition Update

After meeting the team for the 2005 Namaste Aconcagua Expedition in Santiago, we made our way to Mendoza, then Penitentes in Argentina at the base of the mountain to prepare for the climb...and what a fantastic mountain. See page 3 for more; and to read the full mountain story, you can download the expedition report at www.namaste.co.uk/7-summits.htm. Suffice to say,



we all reached the summit in perfect weather on 12 February.

Jubilant from our successful ascent of an amazing and massive mountain, we returned to

Penitentes, but not before a fabulous smoothie laced with a heavy dose of rum. Given that we didn't have to use our spare days on the mountain, we had decided to spend the extra time on the beach in Chile to relax and soak up the experience.

We headed to Horcon, a small fishing village north of Valparaiso, for a surreal mix of great beach, arcade parlours, mime artists, a few locals that seemed like they were on a set from "Night of the Living Dead", and a lovely little cabana. Mixed with healthy doses of beer and seafood, we lived it up, enjoying those creature comforts that get missed in the mountains!

On the second night, though, Jon and Greg fell foul of that travelling hazard, theft. Oh, don't you wish you could get your hands on the thieving bastards! As ever, a good portion of the next morning was spent in the local police office obtaining the requisite paperwork to satisfy the insurance companies.

Duly completed, we turned south along the Chilean coast into the resort towns of Valparaiso and Vina del Mar. Given the local festivals on at the time, it was busy so finding a hotel proved to be a little tricky. But with a spot of charm and a friendly receptionist, we managed to locate a luxurious apartment in Vina del Mar, set high on the cliff top overlooking the ocean.



After a delicious dinner at a great restaurant, Ase headed for the bus, as she was going to

spend another week on the beach in La Serena, and Jon back to the hotel. In the mood, Greg and I decided to hit the town...and red it was painted too, as we both rolled in some time mid-morning the next day.

Feeling the effects, we cruised slowly back to Santiago for Jon and Greg to catch their flights

home, while I prepared for the next leg of the expedition.

Back in Santiago, I was intrigued by the volume of politically-minded taxi drivers, a number of which were distinctly pro-Pinochet. Although it was dictatorial and disregarded human rights, the Pinochet regime engineered a remarkable transformation of Chile's economy, by introducing a programme of free-market reforms coupled with substantial cuts in public spending; and since the end of the regime,



many people have mixed views of the new democracy.

This contrasts with the recent history in Argentina as in 1996 the previously thriving Argentine economy experienced a painful recession and record unemployment levels. This was compounded by the massive currency devaluation four years later, which threw Argentina into crisis. At the time of writing, though, Argentina has largely recovered and is prospering, with the gap between rich and poor significantly much less than in many other South American countries.

Having said a fond farewell to my climbing friends along with plans to meet again on the next challenge some way down the expedition path, I then met up with Vaughn in Santiago (who had come down from LA) and Emma in Mendoza (who had just finished her work in Bolivia.) As always with new travelling companions, you're never quite sure how it will work out as Emma and Vaughn had never met before, but from our first dinner together in Mendoza, I was certain it would be great. And it has been...

Before starting our fascinating journey south through Patagonia to Tierra del Fuego, which I had been looking forward to, we first set out to explore the extensive wine region of western-central Argentina.



Thanks to a recommendation from a friend in Mendoza, we managed to find our way to the relatively

new Salentein vineyard. Including a tantalising tour of the entire operation, we were finally led into the tasting cellar. Impressive indeed, so we just had to find room in the Landie for 6 bottles of a good Malbec red and 6 of the Sauvignon Blanc white. And this was on top of the wine we had already purchased with the food shop the

previous day. We were setting the style of the trip to come for sure! On route to Salentein, we had also passed some of the bigger names such as Moet Chandon and Norton but these were both closed for lunch. And lunch in Argentina is a serious affair, with many shops and businesses simply closing for up to 4 hours in the middle of the day!



As we continued south through the Aracuania and Lake District region of northern Patagonia, we passed backwards and forwards across the Chile/

Argentina border several times, and became very accustomed to filling out the customs forms and temporary permit for the Landie. And on entering Chile, we also developed the art of hiding our fresh produce from the Ministry of Agriculture inspectors. It just wouldn't be right for them to steal our dinner!

As each day passed, the landscape became more dramatic and stunning, turning from the arid mountains of Aracuania to beautiful coniferous forest, snow-capped volcanoes, exquisite lakes and incredible thermal areas. In tandem, our campsites became equally more fantastic, ranging from woodland camps to riverside spots all to our ourselves, to the most amazing site on top of a hill overlooking one of the iridescent blue lakes. This one was also Vaughn and Emma's first experience of some steep off-roading in the Landie - a taste of off-the-beaten track possibilities! And we had just begun our journey into the Patagonian Andes...

With so much more to come, including innumerable national parks, endless off-road tracks, glaciers, snowfields, forests, lakes and wildlife to enjoy, what an adventure lies ahead. With some of the broadest diversity of animal life and some of the most stunning landscapes in South America, the journey to the 'End of the



World' through Patagonia is truly going to be a highlight of the expedition.

On 28 February, we pulled into San Sebastian Termas, where we stayed for 2 nights. Camped in the forest on the edge of a delightful river, we enjoyed a mix of day and night natural thermal pools, and the inevitable joy that comes from supping wine around a roaring campfire.

We also met Amelia and her friends, who lived in a nearby town, who introduced us to some local cuisine and a little insight into the lives of the Mapuche. The largest indigenous group of South-Central Chile, the Mapuche were the only Native Americans on the continent to successfully resist both the Incas and the Spanish, maintaining their independence in a 350-year struggle, until 1883.

Patagonia, Patagonia, Patagonia, do you get the impression you're going to hear more about this incredible place...

by Chris Charlton

Coming Up...to find out how to join, click below

March 2005

Exploring some of the most beautiful national parks in the world through Patagonia, including the Chilean Lake District and Torres del Paine. Then to the 'end of the world' in Tierra del Fuego before heading north along the Argentina coast to Buenos Aires, including the wonderful Peninsular Valdes...

April 2005

Exploring Uruguay then west into Paraguay, stopping at the incredible 1km-high Iguaca Falls. Touring southern Brazil including the amazing Pantanal Wildlife Park and Aparados da Serra before tracking east to Rio, from where the expedition vehicle is shipped to Cape Town South Africa...

Expedition Report

Welcome to the February 2005 Namaste Aconcagua Expedition Report...

On 4th February 2005, 5 climbers from 3 countries set out to scale South America's highest mountain at 6,962m (22,832ft). On Day 9, we all reached the summit in perfect weather, one day ahead of schedule, a fantastic result.

Aconcagua is often underestimated, partly because it is easily accessible and offers non-technical routes, including ours, the Normal Route; and partly because people are unprepared for the effects of high altitude climbing, when the weather

and terrain can present massive physical and mental challenges.

Our expedition was fortunate in that we did not experience the worst that Aconcagua weather can bring, but the challenges and endurance required were tough enough.

Click here for the full story, and with it, everything you need to know to make a successful ascent of this incredible mountain...

Cheers, Chris

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Aconcagua - the Stone Sentinel - Overview

6/2/05 BaseCamp Plaza de Mulas 4,250 m	10/2/05 Camp 1 Canada Camp 5,000 m	11/2/05 Camp 2 Nido de Condores 5,400 m	12/2/05 Camp 3 Berlin Camp 6,000 m	14/2/05 Summit Day Summit 6,962 m



About Aconcagua

Set in the heart of the Andes within Aconcagua Provincial Park on the western edge of the Mendoza Province of Argentina, Aconcagua's North Peak, at 6,962m (22,832ft) is South America's tallest mountain.

Either Ayamaran for "Stone Sentinel" or Quechuan for "White Sentinel", the mountain lies about 12 miles (20 km) east of the Chile-Argentinian border. Whilst it was first climbed in 1897 by a Swiss guide, there is some evidence of Incan passage, though this has yet to be verified.

There is a wide range of climbing possibilities, ranging in difficulty from relatively straightforward to extreme. The majority of people reach the summit via the ruta normal (normal route), which follows the northwest ridge of the mountain. The

second most popular route is via the Polish Glacier. Other routes include south face lines, which present some of the greatest climbing challenges in the world. No route, however, is easy due to the mountain's extreme altitude and weather.

The Normal Route

Following acclimatisation at Puente del Inca (2,700m), about 112 miles (180 km) from Mendoza, the normal route winds its way along the Horcones Valley, usually stopping at Confluencia Camp (3,360m).

Following further acclimatisation camps, the route reaches Plaza de Mulas (4,345m) which serves as base camp. This is the normal stopping point for the equipment-bearing mules, though some do take them to higher camps.

There is then a sequence of higher camps, which groups carry to, and then climb to, the speed of progress depending upon acclimatisation and fitness (7-10 days on average). Summit day is usually attempted from Berlin Camp (6,000m), around 12 -15 hours for the round-trip.

It is also known as the northwest route as part of it follows the northwest ridge.

The Team...

- Andres Jones, 31 from Mendoza, Argentina
- Ase Bente Sinnes, 28 from Sirdal, Norway
- Chris Charlton, 34, from Surrey, England
- Gregor Tait, 38 from Bath, England
- Jon Cook, 43 from Derbyshire, England

People

Fellow Adventurers...



Aconcagua Team:

Andres Jones, 31, from Mendoza, Argentina; Ase Bente Sinnes, 28, from Sirdal, Norway; Gregor Tait, 38, from Bath, England; and Jon Cook, 43, from Derby, England



Vaughn Hart, 57, from Los Angeles, USA, joined the expedition in Santiago, Chile, for a tour through Patagonia



Emma Verity, 31, from London, England, joined the expedition in Mendoza, Argentina, for a 2-month tour of Patagonia, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil.



"...a success...and a well run trip...", Greg, 16/2/2005

"...GREAT!", Ase, 18/2/2005

"A new and fantastic experience...", Emma, 1/3/2005



"No muppets on this trip...", Vaughn, 4/3/2005

Along the way...



A big thank you to all those people who we've met along the way in February, including:

Soledad (Santiago), Capri, Martine, Pablo (Penitentes), Sebastian & all staff from Inka (Mendoza & Aconcagua), all our fellow climbers on Aconcagua, Ricardo, Alexandrio & friends (Malargue), Mariano & Pilar (Salentein), Amelia & Victor Hugo (San Sebastian Termas)...



friends, Victor Hugo (San Sebastian Termas)...

In the News

In the News

The Namaste Global Expedition gets a mention in the Lonely Planet "Career Break Guide" published in Dec 2004; and will appear in the April edition of Wanderlust magazine...

Previous Newsletters

Previous issues of Namaste News are also available at www.namaste.co.uk/news or click the links below if online:

April 2004	May 2004	June 2004
July 2004	Aug 2004	Sep 2004
Oct 2004	Nov 2004	Dec 2004
	Jan 2005	

Letters & Emails

Thank you for all your letters, emails, text messages, and faxes. Each month, a few excerpts will be printed here...

"Hi Chris. The more I see you living your dream out - the happier I become.....well done mate!...I have in the meantime become a father to a great and adventurous 2 year old girl (blonde of course ;-)), who has already been visiting Thailand, Cambodia, Cuba, Spain, Greece and Sweden ;-)...so maybe I could take her meeting up with you somewhere. Best regards", Bo, Copenhagen, Denmark

"Dear Chris, My boyfriend Michael and I have decided to do an Overland trip from California to Argentina in an 80 series Toyota Landcruiser starting in July of this year...We looked up your website and have been amazed by the amount of information on your newsletters which we have printed off and read; so much so that I think we're going to use your route as a backbone for ours, and hopefully learn a bit from your experience...", Emily

"Chris, excellent news on your success [on Aconcagua], have a beer on me. Look forward to speaking soon.", Paul, Bristol, England

"Congratulations on the successful climb, I will raise a glass tonight for you...I note that you are sitting on a beach, just I am trekking to work in the icy cold here!!! not fair!...", Celia, England

"Hi Chris, I returned to UK to be greeted at Gatwick by blinding snow storms and traffic chaos....oh it's good to be back!...not! Lying under the awning of a certain landrover, listening to Three Doors Down, drinking a glass or two of Mr Jack now seem far off memories!! I wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed the Aconcagua trip and appreciated all the efforts you put in to make it such a success. It was evident that you had gone to great lengths to ensure that we would have a well run trip, without it feeling 'packaged'...", Greg, Bath, England

"Hi Chris, Things are fine out here - it's getting warmer and the election passed off without any major attacks. Hopefully it'll stay that way... How are things with you? You've done quite a few miles now how's the rover? Hopefully you haven't had any more dramas with people breaking in. Will definitely have to meet when you're back...", C-Man, Iraq

"Hola Chris. Como va el viaje por este continente, donde te encuentras, espero que todo este saliendo bien, bueno aqui te mando una foto tomada en BAHIA INGLESA en el norte de Chile, donde pasaste un dia, junto a otros de tu misma nacionalidad. Un gran abrazo, y que el viaje resulte todo bien.", Walter, Santiago, Chile

Website Update

Stage 2 Development

The first Namaste Management Guides (Project Management Series; Leadership & Management Series) and Namaste Fun Films (Climbing Denali; A Taste of North America) are now in production; and should become available from March 2005.

Statistics

February 2005	January 2005
Hits: 47,086	Hits: 54,168
Countries: 54	Countries: 45
Downloads: 2,313 Mb	Downloads: 2,546 Mb

Hart's World...

I met Chris in May 2004 in Big Sur, California by chance. It was my lucky day! He told me of his adventure and it struck a chord deep inside immediately and I knew I wanted to be a part of it and share in that kind of adventure.

We talked about Patagonia, kept in touch and in December I was invited to meet him in Santiago, Chile on 22 Feb 2005. We duly met up, picked up Emma in Mendoza, Argentina, and took off on a wonderful trip of sights, storms and spas. It is without a doubt one of the best and most important decisions of my life. After all, life is an adventure!

The three of us bonded immediately, sharing the chores of cooking, cleaning, chopping and solving any problems that arise on the road.

Oh the road... most of which has been rough and dusty so far. However, with that comes the rewards of seeing Patagonia in a way few do. We found an off-road track and camped alongside a beautiful river.

We then found a different track up to an abandoned hut on top of a mountain with unbelievable views of the lake far below. Magnificent sunset and sunrise came with the amazing vista.

So far, we have eaten like pigs! Salmon steaks, beef steak, a variety of delicious mash combinations, pancakes, omelettes, and loads of terrific wine. We visited a winery in Argentina and came away with 12 bottles of red and white.

We have spent 2 days camping at a thermal pools area, soaking day and night under the stars. The townspeople we have met have been so friendly and helpful. One even showed up the next day and shocked my socks off when she yelled my name out when we were at the thermal pools.

We explore by day; Chris makes fire by night and we laugh and listen to lots of music. We have just returned from a real spa day. We thought it would be another 'thermal campsite'; instead we discovered

a deluxe hotel! We soaked, swam, had full body massages and mud therapy. Life has never been so good, coming after a deluge of rain the night before, as today we were blessed

with glorious sunshine.

The adventure will continue as we work our way further south with treks, horse-riding, rafting, photography and penguins to look forward to...

Oh, and anyone thinking this was a dawn to dusk adventure...think again. With the amount of wine consumed and laughter shared, we never get rolling much before noon! Are we the three musketeers or the three stooges? Em and I have decided it's one musketeer and two stooges...

by Vaughn Hart



Is that a Chippendale? No, it's Chris catching some rays!

