

GEOFF COOK'S TRIP TO ARGENTINA

Lodge of Rapport member, Geoff Cook, and friend Mark Barsdell recently had an exciting trip to Argentina where they made an attempt to climb an extinct volcano called Bonete Chico, the fourth highest in South America.

They departed Melbourne on 27th November 2008, had one night in Sydney, then flew Sydney, Auckland, Buenos Aires on a flight that took about 17 hours. They had one night in Buenos Aires then caught a 90 minute flight to La Rioja where they overnighted before taking a 4 hour bus trip to Villa Union where they had another overnight stay followed by a 3 hour four wheel drive trip to a spot with running water where they spent three nights getting used to the altitude which was approx. 3,500 metres above sea level.



Accommodation at Villa Union

They were then taken another hour into a desert region of Argentina approximately 40km from the border with Chile, an area very similar to the Atacama Desert in Chile. With constant freezing winds and very little water to be found, here they caught their first sight of Bonete Chico and made their first camp some 20kms from the base of the mountain which is 22,175 feet (6,759 metres) high. This area is mainly made up of rocky terrain mixed with sand and gravel, and some patches of ice. They also had to contend with overnight temperatures of -15 degrees Celsius.



Vicuna crossing the road on the way to their acclimatisation camp (right side of photo)

It took them 7 days from camp one to reach the mountain, with another 3 camp sites in between their starting point and their final stop. They managed to climb to a height of 6,000 metres before sheer exhaustion forced them back down where they retraced their footsteps back to Camp 1 to await the pick up by the four wheel drive which did not arrive at their expected time forcing them to wait another 2 days before being picked up.



Stone Huts built for shepherds in the late 1800's and used as one of their campsites



Their first camp site



Surrounding country



Stopped for a breather on a Training Hike



Impersonating Lawrence of Arabia



Mini Icebergs



Camp 3 with mini glacier for company



Thumbs up – made it to 6000meters on Mt.Bonete Chico.

Geoff lost 6.5 kilos in weight and his mate, Mark Barsdell, lost a similar amount. They arrived back home in Melbourne on 21st December after a very enjoyable, although trying trip.