

## CultuHike Expedition Across the Andes Strengthens Cultural Exchange Through Shared Experience

*Programme reinforces Years of Culture legacy through people-to-people engagement*

**09 February 2026 - Andes Mountains, Argentina–Chile and Doha, Qatar:** A group of Qatari trekkers has completed a historic high-altitude traverse across the Andes, travelling from Argentina into Chile and concluding on the Pacific coast as part of **CultuHike**, a flagship people-to-people initiative delivered through Years of Culture. The programme forms part of the legacy of the Qatar Argentina and Chile 2025 Year of Culture and reflects Qatar's commitment to international engagement under the framework of Qatar National Vision 2030.

CultuHike is designed to foster cultural understanding through shared experience, bringing participants together on long-distance treks that encourage dialogue, reflection and meaningful exchange. Alongside its sister initiative CultuRide, the programme has become a central component of Years of Culture's experiential approach to cultural engagement, supporting the Vision's emphasis on human, social and cultural development.

HE Mohammed Al Kuwari, Years of Culture Advisor on Latin American Affairs and Qatar's former Ambassador to Mexico added: "CultuHike reflects the long-term vision of the initiative, which is to create lasting relationships between communities through collaboration and exploration. The legacy of each partnership is not measured only in events delivered, but in the connections that continue well beyond the programme year."

Following a trans-Andean route historically used by traders and local communities, participants spend several days navigating rugged terrain, remote valleys and high mountain passes. The physical demands of the journey create conditions that encourage cooperation and trust, allowing relationships to develop organically.

Commenting on the unique experience, Ali bin Towar Al-Kuwari, Years of Culture Sports Lead and Cultuhike and Culturide Creator said: "Programmes like CultuHike are designed to bring people together in environments where connection happens naturally. Shared physical challenges create space for open dialogue, mutual curiosity and genuine understanding. By stepping beyond familiar settings and engaging through collective effort, participants build relationships that go beyond the trail itself. This is how cultural exchange becomes meaningful and lasting."

During the opening stages of the trek, participants and local Argentine and Chilean guides exchanged knowledge spanning environmental practices, traditions and social customs. Discussions included Qatar's desert ecosystems and wildlife, medicinal plant traditions in South America, and the role of family structures in sustaining social cohesion. Conversations around the role of women in community life prompted particularly meaningful dialogue, revealing shared values across cultures separated by geography yet connected through lived experience.

Furthermore, linguistic connections also emerged along the trail. Everyday words such as "sugar", "gato", "rice" and "olive" prompted conversation as similarities across Spanish, English and Arabic are recognised, highlighting centuries of cultural interaction and exchange.

The evenings of the expedition concluded with communal reflection around campfires, allowing participants to share insights from the day's journey. These moments became a defining feature of the experience, encouraging reflection on resilience, personal growth and collective identity.

As the expedition continues through its most demanding stages, participants deepen cross-cultural understanding, strengthen personal connections and build friendships shaped through shared challenge, demonstrating how experiential exchange creates enduring cultural links and contributes to the broader goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.

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#### **About Years of Culture**

The Years of Culture initiative, chaired by Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, spearheads long-lasting cultural partnerships between Qatar and other nations. It exists to promote respect and understanding among diverse cultures and serves as a catalyst for bringing people together, nurturing connections, encouraging dialogue, and deepening understanding. At its core, Years of Culture is a portal for making connections across various sectors, including cultural heritage, creative industries, social and economic development, and innovation, which enriches Qatar's ties with partner countries beyond the dedicated year.

Each year is organised with support from Qatar and partner countries' cultural institutions, ministries, foundations, and private and public sector partners, with assistance from Embassies in Qatar and abroad. Programmes are tailored to explore the unique nature of each partner country.

Previous Years of Culture have included: Qatar-Japan 2012, Qatar-UK 2013, Qatar-Brazil 2014, Qatar-Türkiye 2015, Qatar-China 2016, Qatar-Germany 2017, Qatar-Russia 2018, Qatar-India 2019, Qatar-France 2020, Qatar-USA 2021, Qatar-MENASA 2022, Qatar-Indonesia 2023, Qatar-Morocco 2024, and Qatar Argentina and Chile 2025.

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