

# Prior to the Crash



Prior to the devastating crash in the Andes Mountains, a group of rugby players and loved ones made jokes, played cards, and even tossed a football around. The mood was light and relaxed, full of energy. Never did they expect a world-renown, but devastating survival event to occur.

October 13, 1972, was the day that the plane departed from Mendoza, Argentina, after stopping there for a night due to inclement weather. The destination was Santiago, where the rugby match was supposed to be held. Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> is superstitious to many, but flying on this day hadn't occurred to any of the passengers.

# Flying on the Plane

The plane could not directly fly from Mendoza over the Andes, to Santiago because of the weather. Instead, the pilots decided to fly south from Mendoza, then turn west towards the Andes Mountains. The pilot notified air controllers in Santiago that he was over Curicó, Chile, and was cleared to descend, which proved to be a fatal error. The pass was covered by the clouds, so they didn't realize they were on the Andes Mountains. They failed to take into account strong headwinds that slowed the plane and increased the time required to complete the crossing. They were not as far west as they thought and, as a result, the turn and descent were initiated too soon, before the plane had passed through the mountains leading to a fatal crash.



# The Plane Crash



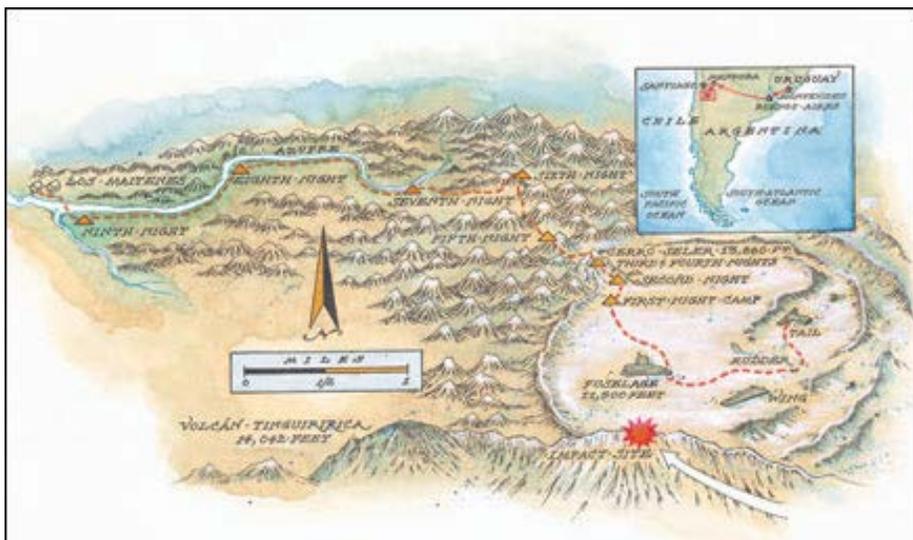
Initially, the plane's right wing hit a mountain peak, and then the left wing went, which sent the middle of the plane sliding down a mountain range. Of the 45 people on the plane, 12 died in the crash. By the next morning, another 5 passengers died. The remaining 28 faced severe difficulties in surviving in the freezing mountains at such a high altitude.

# The Search

Search parties from three countries looked for the missing plane, but since the plane was white and in the middle of snow, they abandoned the search. The survivors even tried to write an SOS on the airplane with lipstick, but didn't have enough lip stick to complete it.

# Survival

The survivors only had a few chocolate bars, some snacks, and wine. During the next few days, they rationalized the food evenly, but soon enough, they ran out. They tried eating crumbs and anything they could find. They ripped open the plane seats in hopes they were made from straw, but found only foam. They even considered eating leather straps from their briefcases, but knew that it would only do more harm than good. They were just surrounded by ice, rocks, plastic, and aluminum. There seemed to be only one method left to survive.



# Cannibalism

The survivors contemplated eating the dead bodies in order to survive. All of the passengers were Roman Catholic and used the following quote from the bible to justify their acts of survival: no man hath greater love than this: that he lay down his life for his friends. Eating the dead bodies of their friends and loved ones kept them alive, but food wasn't the only tribulation they had to face.



# Avalanche

Next came an avalanche. Eight of the initial survivors subsequently died when an avalanche cascaded down on them as they slept. For three days they survived in a terribly

confined space since the plane was buried under several feet of snow. One of the survivors made a hole in the top of the plane to allow oxygen to flow.

# Trekking to the End

Nando Parrado, the leader of the survivors, along with Roberto Canessa climbed up the Andes Mountains hoping to find green instead of snow. Unfortunately, they underestimated how far the greenery was away from the top of the mountain and felt hopeless. However, since they made it this far they decided to continue on their journey until they died.

On December 20, 1972, their ninth day of trekking, **Nando Parrado** and Roberto Canessa miraculously stumbled upon a shepherd's camp in the Chilean region of Los Maitenes. They were saved and felt a sense of relief, happiness, and new found wisdom. Two days later, Parrado led helicopters to the 14 remaining survivors and their story became known as the Miracle in the Andes.



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