

# Aconcagua: Stone Sentinel — Design & Vision Whitepaper (v0.1)

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## Public (living) document.

This whitepaper gathers the vision, design principles, and foundational decisions behind **Aconcagua: Stone Sentinel**. It is not a feature promise, not a GDD, and not technical documentation. It is the frame: the *why* and the *for what* that supports everything else.

Status: v0.1 (foundational)

Location: </meta/project-whitepaper.md>

Related documents:

- </meta/public-roadmap.md>
- </docs/> — design, systems, narrative
- </art/> — visual references

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## 0. Note to the reader

If you arrived here looking for “how far along the game is” or “when it will ship,” this document is not meant to answer that. What you will find instead is a clear and public explanation of what kind of work this project is trying to be, which limits it embraces, which decisions have already been made, and why.

This project follows a simple rule: **fewer promises, more criteria**.

The whitepaper exists to reduce noise, prevent drift, and enable serious conversations with people who may want to accompany, support, or challenge the project.

How to read it:

- To understand the core vision: read it cover to cover.
- To orient quickly: jump to “Non-negotiable design principles” and “Scope and limits.”
- For operational details: see the roadmap and the rest of the repository documentation.

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## 1. Project origin

**Aconcagua: Stone Sentinel** originates in repeated, real experiences in the Aconcagua region. Not from touristic fantasy or borrowed epic, but from the body: walking, breathing, waiting; watching how weather reshapes the logic of a day; feeling how altitude rewrites mood and judgment; learning that “progress” does not always mean “speed.”

The project’s author visited the area multiple times and took part in a **successful summit expedition via the 360 Route (Polish Traverse) in January 2026**. This detail is not included as a credential, but as context. Some aspects of Aconcagua cannot be understood through videos or second-hand accounts. They are understood when you have to sustain small decisions over many days: when to eat, when to stop, when to push, when to let go. When the landscape is not a postcard but a system. When silence stops being “atmosphere” and becomes part of thinking.

The impulse behind the project is straightforward: **to translate that lived experience into an interactive language**, making the mountain accessible to more people—without turning it into a theme park or a power fantasy—and, at the same time, to help surface the broader Andean mountaineering culture that has existed there for centuries, from ancestral presence to modern expeditions.

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## 2. What kind of game this is (and what it is not)

What it is:

- A contemplative, narrative-driven game focused on **decision, consequence, and attention**.
- An experience where the mountain functions as **presence** and **system**, not as a boss fight.
- A project aiming for **situated realism**: enough fidelity for body and environment to matter, without collapsing into obsessive simulation.

What it is not (by design):

- Not an action game set in the mountains.
- Not a “soulslike on Aconcagua.”
- Not a catalog of feats or heroic escalation.
- Not a punitive survival game built around constant failure.
- Not an empty postcard: the aesthetic may be poetic, but the mountain is never just scenery.

In this game, the primary conflict is not defeating the mountain. It is **learning to read it** and **to act within its rules**.

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## 3. Non-negotiable design principles

These principles are not slogans. They are design boundaries. If a future decision violates them, that decision is wrong and must be reconsidered.

1. **The body matters**  
Altitude is not a debuff. It is a continuous negotiation between physiology, weather, energy, rest, and mental state.
2. **Time matters**  
The mountain moves at a different rhythm. Slowness is not a flaw; it is part of the gameplay. Waiting, margins, and timing are meaningful decisions.
3. **The mountain is not an enemy**

This is not about “winning.” It is about reading signals, respecting limits, and responding accordingly.

#### 4. Contemplation is gameplay

Looking, orienting, observing, choosing not to act, returning, resting—these are real actions with real consequences.

#### 5. Limits are meaningful

Not everything is possible. Not everything should be attempted. Retreat can be the correct decision.

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## 4. Aconcagua as a living system

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The project is built around a central idea: **Aconcagua is a system, not a backdrop.**

Core system components at the design level:

- **Geography:** terrain, routes, camps, exposure.
- **Weather:** wind, temperature, visibility, variability.
- **Altitude:** acclimatization, fatigue, hypoxia, recovery.
- **Resources:** water, food, shelter, energy, time.
- **Accumulated decisions:** small mistakes that do not “kill” immediately but compound over time.

**Target representation:** enough realism for the player to feel that:

- each day follows its own internal logic,
- every weather shift changes the decision space,
- and every choice leaves traces.

The goal is not clinical accuracy in every variable. The goal is to capture the phenomenon: **the mountain changes the rules while you are playing.**

For a visual and structural overview of these systems, see the documentation in [/docs/](#).

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## 5. Culture, history, and human presence

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Aconcagua is more than a famous summit. It is a territory layered with human presence: Andean cultures, ancestral routes, modern expeditions, logistics, labor, science, tourism, accidents, rituals, and memory.

The project takes a clear stance:

- **no empty folklore**, no ornamental “local color”;
- **no narrative extractivism**, no use of symbols as props;
- **yes to respectful presence**, context, and responsibility.

Human presence may appear through:

- traces and signs (objects, paths, remnants),
- educational collectables (regional flora and fauna as sightings),
- micro-stories and real tensions (logistics, ethics, care, weather),
- carefully researched cultural references.

The guiding rule is simple: **if it cannot be done with care, it should not be done at all.**

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## 6. Player experience

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This is not a game designed to be finished quickly. It is a game designed to:

- slow perception,
- train attention,
- require decisions under incomplete information,
- and encourage early signal recognition.

**Target sensations:**

- solitude accompanied by presence (mountain, wind, human traces),
- calm interrupted by uncertainty,
- brief clarity amid fatigue,
- humility before the system.

**What progression means:**

- learning to read weather and terrain,
- adjusting expectations,
- managing resources,
- developing judgment,
- understanding that “reaching the top” is not always the primary objective.

Silence is not absence; it is a tool. Error is not punishment; it is information. Fatigue is not a bar; it is narrative.

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## 7. Scope and limits

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This project is designed with indie viability in mind—not as a compromise, but as a creative frame.

### Deliberate limits (v0.1):

- A controlled set of routes/segments (depth over breadth).
- Clear, legible systems (meaning over unnecessary complexity).
- A stylized, consistent visual direction (coherence over hyper-realism).
- Environmental and fragmentary storytelling (avoiding exposition dumps).

### Explicitly avoided:

- promises of a “total simulator,”
- massive open-world coverage of the entire park,
- ambition inflation through features that erode the core experience.

A guiding sentence: **if a feature does not serve the non-negotiable principles, it does not belong.**

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## 8. Current state of the project

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### Defined and stable:

- Project identity: contemplative, narrative, situated.
- Non-negotiable design principles (Section 3).
- Systemic direction: mountain as a living system (Section 4).
- Commitment to responsible cultural representation (Section 5).
- Decision to articulate the project publicly (this document).

### Open and exploratory:

- Exact structure of the core loop (days, objectives, returns).
- Degree and representation of physiological simulation.
- Narrative delivery mechanisms.
- Balance of educational collectables (flora/fauna) within gameplay.

### Intentionally postponed:

- platform commitments, release dates, monetization specifics,
- technical promises without supporting prototypes.

For sequencing and priorities, see  
</meta/public-roadmap.md>.

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## 9. A living document

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This whitepaper will be updated when foundational shifts occur:

- new principles,
- scope redefinitions,
- major changes to the core loop,
- ethical or cultural decisions,
- or lessons learned through prototyping.

### Versioning convention:

- v0.x — foundational phase (framework and base decisions)
  - v1.0 — consolidated framework (core loop prototyped, scope locked)
  - v1.x — iterative refinements without altering the core
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## Closing note

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**Aconcagua: Stone Sentinel** does not aim to represent the mountain; it aims to enter into dialogue with it.

It does not sell epic; it builds judgment.

It does not shout; it asks the player to listen.

If this framework resonates with you, the most useful question is not “when will it release?” but:  
**which part of this vision needs more precision, more care, or more testing?**

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## Appendix A — Minimal glossary (v0.1)

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- **Situated realism:** fidelity to key phenomena (altitude, weather, decision) without total simulation.
- **Contemplation as gameplay:** attentive actions (looking, waiting, observing, choosing not to act) with consequences.

- **Living system:** interacting variables that alter conditions and meaning over time.
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## Appendix B — Internal repository references

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- [/meta/public-roadmap.md](#) — sequencing and priorities
- [/docs/](#) — systems, design, narrative, legal, research
- [/art/](#) — visual references and art direction