

ANDES ADVENTURES

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PATAGONIA TREK & HIKING ADVENTURE **NATIONAL PARKS: TORRES DEL PAINE, LOS GLACIARES, TIERRA DEL FUEGO**

February 21 to March 8, 2012

Day 1 Tuesday - February 21: Departure to Santiago

Day 2 Wednesday - February 22: Santiago/Punta Arenas

Early morning arrival in Santiago, where you will be met by your trip leader outside the customs area at the airport and continue together on your flight to Punta Arenas, located on the northern shore of the Strait of Magellan (S 53° 9.6', W 70° 54.5')..

Overnight in Punta Arenas, Los Navegantes Hotel. Meals: D.

Today's hike: None scheduled.

Day 3 Thursday - February 23: Punta Arenas/Torres del Paine

After a nice overnight rest, we drive north through the Patagonian rolling plains. Weather permitting, we plan a detour to visit a colony of Magellanic penguins in Otway Sound. We stop for lunch at the quaint town of Puerto Natales, situated on the shores of Seno Ultima Esperanza (Last Hope Sound). Afterwards we continue our drive to Torres del Paine National Park, on the way we will see large herds of sheep and baqueanos (cowboys). As we approach the park along Laguna Amarga, we will have our first views of the spectacular granite Towers of Paine. It is likely we will also enjoy sightings of herds of guanacos, condors, flocks of pink flamingos, a variety of foxes, geese, ñandus (wild ostriches) and other wildlife. After entering the park, we get settled at refugio Torres.

Overnight: Refugio Torres. Meals: B, L, D.

Today's hike: Optional distances around the refugio in Torres del Paine.

Driving distance: About 240 miles plus additional 40 miles to the rookery.

Day 4 Friday - February 24: Torres del Paine - Hike to the towers

After reviewing the day's route with our guide, we hike up the Ascencio Valley. We cross the river and continue uphill along a lenga and cypress trail. As we pass by campamento Chileno and the foot of Mt. Almirante Nieto, the trail follows a southern beech forest, finally reaching a moraine that takes us to the cirque below the famous Towers of Paine; Torre Sur (9,350'), Torre Central (9,186') and Torre Norte (8,530'). Downhill back to the refugio.

Overnight: Refugio Torres. Meals: B, L, D.

Today's hike: 10.5 miles or about 6 to 8 hours, including the out-and-back hike to the towers. A shorter hike is optional.

Day 5 Saturday - February 25: Torres del Paine

This morning we explore our surroundings and hike along the north shore of Lago Nordenskjold following the "W" circuit of the Park.

Overnight: Refugio Cuernos. Meals: B, L, D.

Today's hike: 9.5 miles or about 5 hours.

Day 6 Sunday - February 26: Torres del Paine - French Valley

We hike west of Lago Scottsberg and follow a trail along rolling foothills arriving at the Italian camp. You will have views of the enormous horns Cuernos del Paine (7,217', 7,874' and 8,530') on the east and the glaciated Cerro Paine Grande (10,006') on the west, as well as Lago Nordenskjold and Lago Pehoé. Overnight at Paine Grande Mountain Lodge on the shore of Pehoé Lake. Elevation: About 270'.

Overnight: Paine Grande Mountain Lodge. Meals: B, L, D.

Today's hike: 8 miles or about 4 hours. An optional out-and-back hike up the French valley, offers beautiful vistas of the Cuernos del Paine.

Day 7 Monday - February 27: Torres del Paine - Grey Lake & Glacier

We hike toward Lago Grey and Glacier Grey - a 4 mile wide glacier originating in the Continental Ice Cap. As we hike along Lago Grey, we will see turquoise-colored icebergs blown to the opposite side of the lake by the strong winds. We hike to Grey glacier and return late in the afternoon.

Overnight: Paine Grande Mountain Lodge. Meals: B, L, D.

Today's hike: About 12 miles or 6 to 7 hours.

Day 8 Tuesday - February 28: Torres del Paine/El Calafate

We take a catamaran across Lago Pehoé and arrive at Refugio Pudeto where our vehicle is waiting for us. (Depending on wind conditions we may hike to the park headquarters). As we drive to the park entrance, we enjoy the best views of Lago Pehoé, Lago Nordenskjold and Lago Sarmiento as well as the Horns and Towers. We cross the Argentine border and arrive in the village of El Calafate on the shore of Lago Argentino.

Overnight: Tehuel Plaza. Meals: B, L, D.

Today's hike: None scheduled.

This is a long day of driving (about 5 1/2 hours), partly over dirt roads across the pampas. There is no other alternative way to travel, however there is always something to see along the way. Grazing sheep, wildlife and the unusual open range Patagonian steppes scenery.

Day 9 Wednesday - February 29: Parque los Glaciares - El Chaltén

We drive along Lago Argentino to the spectacular Perito Moreno Glacier - the world's only glacier outside the polar region that is still advancing. Afterward we continue our drive north crossing Río (river) Santa Cruz and along Río La Leona to the shores of Lago Viedma till we reach the village of El Chaltén at 800 feet. As we approach El Chaltén we can see our first view of Mount Fitz Roy (11,171') and Cerro Torre (10,177')..

Overnight in El Chaltén, Hosteria Kalenshen. Meals: B, L, D.

Today's hike: Short hike in Perito Moreno.

Day 10 Thursday - March 1: Parque los Glaciares - Laguna de los Tres

We hike along a ridge below Cerro Leon (2,840'). We have fabulous views of Mount Fitz Roy, Poincenot and other granite peaks and glaciers. We follow the Chorillo del Salto stream and cross lenga forest until we reach the base camp of Río Blanco. You can continue on the optional hike to Laguna de los Tres, from where you will have outstanding views of Fitz Roy, the adjacent Poincenot needle (9,849'), Rafael, Saint Exupery, other granite spires and the Piedras Blancas glacier. Visit Laguna Capri on your way down.

Overnight in El Chaltén, Hosteria Kalenshen. Meals: B, L, D.

Today's hike: About 8 miles or 6 hours, plus an optional out-and-back hike up to Laguna de los Tres.

Day 11 Friday - March 2: Parque los Glaciares - Laguna Torre

This morning we hike down to Río Fitz Roy and follow the river up to Laguna Torre at 2,164' at the base of Cerro Torre (you have the option to admire the view from the Fitz Roy valley). Cerro Torre is one of the most difficult mountains in the world to climb because of its vertical walls topped by an overhanging mushroom of ice. With some luck it will be clear to see Cerro Torre; note that the vertical east granite face of Cerro Torre is over 7,000 feet (twice as high as Yosemite's El Capitan), the hike continues through Laguna Madre e Hija and descends to El Chaltén. Overnight in our familiar lodge.

Overnight in El Chaltén, Hosteria Kalenshen. Meals: B, L, D.

Today's hike: About 9 miles or 6 hours, plus additional options if you want to make it longer.

Day 12 Saturday - March 3: Flight to Ushuaia

We drive to El Calafate and fly to Ushuaia the "Southernmost City in the World" on the island of Tierra del Fuego.

After lunch we board a boat or catamaran for a 3 hour cruise along the Beagle Channel. We cruise south to Isla de Los Pájaros (Birds' Island) and Isla de los Lobos (Sea Lion Island) where you can observe the Sea Lions and Imperial Cormorants. You will also see brown hooded Gulls, South American Terns, Black-browed Albatross, Giant Petrels, Great Skuas and other marine wildlife. After circling the Eclaireurs Light House, we return to Ushuaia sailing along the northern shore of the channel.

Overnight: Ushuaia, Hotel Tierra del Fuego. Meals: B, L, D.

Today's hike: None scheduled.

Driving time: About 3 1/2 hours. Flight: About an hour.

Day 13 Sunday - March 4: Parque Nacional Tierra del Fuego

After breakfast we drive to Tierra del Fuego National Park west of Ushuaia. We start our hike at the Pampa Alta Trail. Our guide will lead us through lovely sub-Antarctic forests of beech, ñire, lenga, coihue and an abundance of moss and ferns. After reaching the top (about 1,000') we enjoy a panoramic view of the Beagle Channel, Isla Redonda and Ensenada Bay. We descend and connect with Sendero de La Costa (Coastal Trail) and continue along the rocky shores of the bay finishing at Roca Lake. After lunch we visit Bahía Lapataia.

The park offers great opportunities for bird-watching. Some of the species that you will see are the Black-browed Albatross, Giant Petrels, Steamer Ducks, Magellanic Woodpecker, Thorn-tailed Rayadito, Chimango Caracaras, Black-Chested Buzzard Eagles and others.

Overnight: Ushuaia, Hotel Tierra del Fuego. Meals: B, L, D.

Today's hike: Today's hike: 8 miles with options for more or less. Driving distance: 25 miles.

Day 14 Monday - March 5: Ushuaia/Buenos Aires

Morning flight to Buenos Aires, Argentina's cosmopolitan capital. We arrive at Aeroparque Jorge Newberry Airport and transfer to our centrally located hotel, a few blocks from the city's landmark, the Obelisco.

Overnight: Buenos Aires, Park Central Unique. Meals: B, L, D.

Flight time: About 3 hours 20 minutes.

Day 15 Tuesday - March 6: Buenos Aires

We start our walking city tour of Buenos Aires from the hotel. This tour shows you the city's highlights, looking through its history and culture, the historic development, the immigration process, the architectural heritage, Peronismo era and other features of the Argentinean society. You'll learn about cultural topics like tango music and soccer.

Starting from Plaza de Mayo we will enjoy a tour of the most remarkable highlights of this unique metropolis. Our itinerary will focus on the main places of interest of the southern and northern region of Buenos Aires: major plazas, colonial churches, old-time cafes, bohemian artist's quarter, colorfully painted metal houses, grand avenues, palatial mansions and spacious parks. We arrive in the neighborhood of San Telmo and complete our tour by bus, visiting the neighborhoods of La Boca, Puerto Madero, Palermo and Recoleta.

After a late lunch, time on your own for shopping and sightseeing in Buenos Aires.

Optional tango show and dinner. (See note below.)

Overnight: Buenos Aires, Park Central Unique. Meals: B, L, D.*

Today's hike: Walking tour in the city of Buenos Aires.

**A popular tango show and dinner is offered at a special discounted price, otherwise dinner is on your own and not included.*

Day 16 Wednesday - March 7: Buenos Aires

Free day to enjoy Buenos Aires on your own.

Afternoon transfer to the Ezeiza International Airport for our evening flight home.

Meals: B.

Day 17 Thursday - March 8: Arrival Home