

ARGENTINA - SOUTHERN EXPLORER: EL CHALTEN TO USHUAIA



INTRODUCTION

Explore remote Southern Patagonia on this 13 Day adventure. Discover some of South America's finest national parks including the Los Glaciares National Park, home to some of the world's most stunning ice formations, Torres Del Paine National Park famous for its granite pillars, lakes and mountains & Tierra Del Fuego National Park, located in one of the most Southern regions of the world. This is a tour of overwhelming natural beauty!

Please note this trip operates in reverse from Ushuaia to El Chalten on 26/01/2020, 20/03/2020, 14/11/2020 Contact us for more details.

ITINERARY

DAY 1: Arrival in El Chalten

After arriving into El Calafate airport, you will be met at the airport and transferred to El Chalten, located in the stunning Parque Nacional Los Glaciares. (Approximately 2.5hr drive including a short stop at a roadhouse.) This tour is operated under our group travel brand, Viva Expeditions. Viva specialises in guided small group tours to Latin America. Please join your tour leader for a tour meeting at 6:30pm, look out for joining details in the lobby. Enjoy a welcome dinner with the group this evening



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DAY 1: El Chalten

El Chaltén is a small mountain village that lies within the magnificent World Heritage Listed Parque Nacional Los Glaciares at the base of Cerro Torre and Cerro Fitz Roy mountains. "Chaltén" is a Tehuelche word that means "Smoking Mountain", as they believed that Cerro Fitz Roy was a volcano, its summit enshrouded by clouds. Today El Chaltén is Argentina's trekking capital. The towering granite spires and fissured glaciers of the Torre and Fitzroy groups offer some of the most stunning scenery and spectacular hiking and trekking in southern Patagonia. A network of world-class trails take you to viewpoints with breath-taking vistas including those of Cerro Torre and Cerro Fitzroy peaks. There are also tracks to Torre Glacier, Piedras Blancas Glacier, Laguna Capri, Laguna de los Tres, Chorillo del Salto and the remote Pasa del Viento (Windy Pass).



DAY 2: El Chalten Trekking

A full day hiking today, we meet our local guides and set off on one of the main hiking trails in the wonderful Los Glaciares National Park, (the Lago Torre* hike is our usual option). Enjoy spectacular scenery and obtain views of the magical Cerro Torre or the wonderful Mount FitzRoy. Keep your eyes peeled to spot regional birds including woodpeckers, caracaras and condors. *The Lago Torre trail takes us first to a wonderful view point with a picture postcard shot of almost the entire mountain range including Cerro Torre and Mount FitzRoy. From this point, we can also see the Margarita Waterfall and the Rio Fitzroy. Continuing up to a saddleback in the mountain we are gifted with a view of the valley and can easily see the snow-capped Andes range. Descending into the valley and through the high deciduous beech tree forest we hike over an old moraine and finish at Lake Torre which is flanked by the Cerro Torre Glacier. The complete Cerro Torre hike requires a moderate level of fitness and is a full day of hiking. We offer a shorter hiking plan that enables you to still see the stunning surrounding scenery but you would need to do the full extension to see the Cerro Torre Glacier. Meals: (B), (L)



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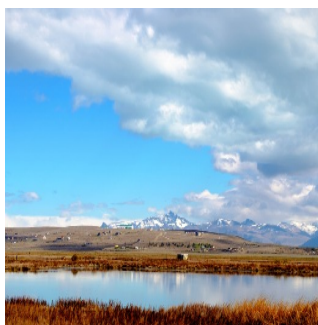
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DAY 3: El Chalten to El Calafate

Spend the morning exploring some of the other great walking trails El Chalten is famous for. This morning we hike up to Laguna Capri, this is the first 6kms (12kms return) of the Laguna de los Tres trail. It is a continuously ascending trail to the laguna but our local guides will maintain a comfortable pace to enable you to enjoy and stop for photos and information. We will navigate our way around the loop of lookout points giving you a spectacular view of the Mount FitzRoy range. You will also be able to see the Piedras Blancas glacier and taken in the flora and fauna of the park. We return back to El Chalten town and regroup back at our hotel. In the mid-afternoon, we will continue by road to El Calafate. Enroute we will stop at a historic homestead saloon with some famous outlaw visitors. We continue through the steppe before seeing the beautiful Lake Argentina, the biggest freshwater lake in Argentina. We arrive into El Calafate, our base to visit the impressive Perito Moreno glacier. Meals: (B), (L), (D)



DAY 4: El Calafate: Perito Moreno Glacier

The Perito Moreno Glacier is one of the earth's most dynamic and accessible ice fields. Visiting this glacier, we can witness from a series of walkways huge chunks of ice breaking free from the face of the glacier and crashing with a mighty roar into the water. We set off from town and take the old, unpaved road with no rush and plenty of time for bird and animal spotting. Along the way, we learn about the guachos (cowboys) and life on the estancias before stopping at one of them for a coffee. On our way to the glacier our expert local guide will explain the amazing phenomena that this glacier is famous for and why it is considered stable and not retreating like many other glaciers in the area. If lucky, a highlight is watching and hearing giant chunks of ice plummet into the waters of Lake Argentina. After a few hours of free time to explore the walkways we transfer to the port and enjoy a one-hour boat ride that brings us 300m (1000ft) from the glacier's wall. This is a wonderful way to get close to the glacier and appreciate its daunting size and power. After this amazing encounter, we head back to El Calafate town. Meals: (B), (L)



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DAY 5: El Calafate - Torres Del Paine

Head back into Chile to Torres Del Paine, South Americas finest National Park and a trekker's paradise. Declared a Reserve of the Biosphere by UNESCO in 1978 it is located amongst the mountain range of the Andes and the Patagonian steppe. In this zone, the colossal towers and horns of granite and rock that have given world-wide fame to it, with heights of up to 3,050 meters above the sea level. The park preserves fragile ecosystems, numerous animals like guanacos, condors, ñandues (South American ostrich), foxes and the elusive puma. The 3 famous hikes we cover inside the park, these are: (a) Los Torres Hike (b) French Valley Hike (c) Greys Glacier Hike Instead of walking these continuously, carrying all your hiking gear like on the Big W (a 4 day hike), we break it into three separate walks, covering different sections of the park and hiking an average of 15km (9.5mi) to 20km (12mi) each day. The group is assisted by expert local trekking guides who share information about the environment and guide you through the hiking trails. If you are not hiking there are other activities available inside Torres Del Paine including tours be vehicle, boat and on horse-back. However, please note these activities are subject to availability and minimum numbers and will incur an additional cost. Please note activities are weather dependent. Please ask about our Torres Light Add-On. Meals: (B), (L), (D)



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DAY 6: Torres Del Paine - Las Torres Hike

Las Torres Hike (Difficult) Hiking to view the iconic Las Torres (the Towers) is a challenging yet immensely satisfying hike, a highlight for all experienced trekkers. The Towers are the three massive granite columns that encircle the smaller Torres Glacier. The Towers hike is by far the most strenuous of all the hikes. From the entrance, you have a 1.5km/1mi flat warm up to the start of the trailhead at Hosteria Las Torres. You start off climbing up the side of one of the mountains, all dirt paths and quite steep in gradient in areas. It then flattens out as you scale the side of the valley with a great river underneath you. A short downhill section will bring you to the refugio Chileno. Here you can buy snacks and rest for a while and use the facilities. Although you can see the tips of the towers from the refugio, this hike is fully appreciated when you are able to hike the full length. Once you leave the refugio you start climbing again for about 1 hour crossing rivers and passing through a beautiful forest. The final 45 minutes are quite challenging as you scramble up boulders to the base of the towers. Full walk takes approximately 8 - 9 hours return including time for lunch and depending on your ability/physical strength. *We offer a fantastic optional day for those unable to attempt the Towers. It involves heading to another section of the park, enjoying a shorter hike and visiting indigenous hand paintings while still having a view of the Towers. Meals: (B), (L), (D)



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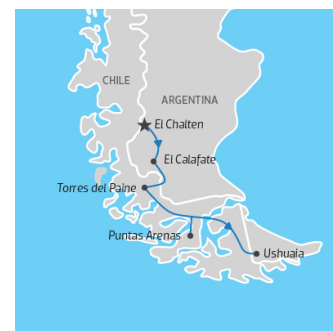
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DAY 7: Torres del Paine - French Valley Hike

French Valley Hike (Moderate - Difficult) The French Valley is the most beautiful valley in the Torres del Paine National Park. It is a steep hike and offers incredible its unique panoramic views of Los Cuernos del Paine, the French Glacier and Lakes Nordenskjold, Pehoé, Scottsburg and Toro. This walk starts at the same place as the Greys Glacier walk and between the hikes we stay overnight at the Paine Grande Refuge so you do not have to return across the lake to our hotel, effectively allowing you additional time to complete the hikes (please note you will take an overnight bag with you (provided) and your main luggage will be stored for you) This is a very different walk to the Greys Glacier. Slightly longer for the shorter walk and at times the track can be rocky and steep. The entrance to the valley is Italiano Camp (7.5km/4.5mi) and is our short hike stopping point. For those who continue up into the valley to the French Lookout the trail becomes steep with loose gravel and boulders. With a 300m/1000ft elevation gain you have wonderful views of the valley as well as the amazing view of mountains all around. You can sit, watch and hear ice crack and maybe even see a mini avalanche. Full walk takes approximately 8 - 9 hours return including time for lunch and depending on your ability and physical strength. Meals: (B), (L), (D)



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DAY 8: Torres del Paine - Puerto Natales

Greys Glacier trek (Easy - moderate) Grey Glacier is one of the principal tourist attractions located in Chile. As soon as you get to this place you will be breath taken with the lakes creamy blue colour dotted with icebergs floating and the Patagonia Icefield at the back. Initially you will walk through a valley before climbing a steep incline, onto a ridge taking you first through a burnout forest and then into a green live forest. A little further along the trail brings you to an elevated view of Grey Lake. You hike along an exposed ridge line before reaching the Grey Glacier Lookout point. (Approx 2.5hrs) If you are looking for a short hike this would be your turn around point, heading back the same way to the start of the trail. Continuing down another 2 hours further from this point you get to the main Refugio Grey Glacier view point which brings you a lot closer to this magnificent ice sheet. From here you have a magnificent view of the glacier across the water and usually the wonderful blue of the icebergs floating in the lake below. All viewpoints of the glacier are from a front on angle. Full walk takes approximately 7 - 8 hours return including time for lunch and depending on your ability/physical strength. At the conclusion of your full day trekking we will head to our hotel in Puerto Natales. Meals: (B), (L)



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DAY 9: Puerto Natales to Punta Arenas

After a leisurely morning we will head off to Punta Arenas, located on the edge of the Straights of Magallen. Tonight you will enjoy a meal prepared by a talented, local chef who takes local regional foods and gives you a taste of the variety of unusual tastes and flavours they have. Meals: (B), (D)



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DAY 10: Punta Arenas - Cerro Sombrero

Enjoy your morning exploring Punta Arenas, a place of historical riches; see the mansions and museums of the wealthy wool barons who lived the high life during the boom of the 1890s or take on the wind as you walk along the beautiful promenade by the water's edge, before crossing the Straits of Magellan onto the island of Tierra del Fuego. Meals: (B), (D)



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DAY 11: Cerro Sombrero - Ushuaia

In the morning, we visit a King Penguin colony, they are usually only found on sub Antarctic islands, such as the remote and difficult to access South Georgia and Falkland Islands. Observing them here is a unique opportunity! We cross into Argentina and pass Lago Fagnano before heading over the Garibaldi Pass (500m/1500ft) and into the southernmost city in the world of Ushuaia. Now a major tourist town it is a great base for hiking, winter sports and starting point for many cruises to Antarctica. Meals: (B), (L)



DAY 12: Ushuaia - Tierra del Fuego National Park

In the morning, you will embark the catamaran that will take you through the waters of Beagle Channel. Sailing along Ushuaia Bay you get an excellent panoramic view of the city framed by Andean mountains. Passing by Archipelago Bridges you'll reach Birds Island, where you will be able to appreciate the vast variety of sea birds that live in the area: cormorants, skuas, petrels, ducks, sea gulls, etc. Close to this place, you will see the Sea Lions and a unique opportunity to watch at the same time sea lions of two distinct species. You will finally get to Les Eclaireurs Lighthouse, the iconic symbol of the beagle channel before returning to Ushuaia. After some free time to grab some lunch, in the afternoon we visit Tierra Del Fuego National Park where you will be able to enjoy the wonderful natural environment with visits to Ensenada Bay, Alakush Visitors Centre including a small museum learn about the indigenous Yamana, see an old beaver dam and finish at Lapataia Bay, "The End of the Road" where the end of the famous Panamerican Highway is found more than 17000km/11000mi from where it begins. Enjoy a special farewell dinner at one of Ushuaia's great restaurants. Meals: (B), (D)



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DAY 13: Ushuaia Departure

Depart Ushuaia with wonderful memories, and a new respect of our wonderful planet courtesy of Patagonia. You may depart any time after breakfast today. Meals: (B) Note: The information regarding itinerary is given in good faith and is subject to change and /or cancellation, due to weather / political and / or country instabilities and general safety / road conditions etc. Any such changes and/or cancellations which are in our control will be decided by the crew and will be discussed with the group beforehand whenever possible.



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INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation

Standard

Inclusions

11 nights' accommodation in standard hotels; 1 night in a dorm hiking lodge (shared facilities)
Transport in our custom built all-terrain expedition vehicles
12 Breakfasts, 8 Lunches, 9 Dinners
Service of an experienced western tour leader as well as local guides
Experienced Driver/Mechanic
All National Park Entrance fees

Difficulty Rating

3 Light Adventure (High altitude in some areas)

Single Surcharge

Single supplement for guaranteed single room is 25% of the total tour cost. However we offer a willing to share option for all solo travellers where we will pair you with another traveller of the same sex to share a twin room.

Notes

Please note this is a small group tour. However, departures are guaranteed with a minimum of 2 pax.

Price Dependent upon

Season and availability

SUSTAINABILITY

Chimu Adventures undertakes a number of sustainability measures within its operations including:

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- 1) Only using local guides and office staff to both maximise local employment opportunities and minimise carbon footprints. Local guides also ensure you benefit from the intimate knowledge, passion and culture of the country you're visiting.
- 2) Where possible, using locally owned and operated boutique hotels to maximise the return to the local community.
- 3) Chimu's "Pass it on" programme has provided funding to hundreds of local community projects in Latin America. Our aim is to empower local communities, helping them to develop their own infrastructure for the future. Since 2006, we have been working with Kiva (a well-known Non-Governmental Organisation), providing hundreds of loans to local businesses all over South America.
- 4) In our pre tour information we provide a range of tips and advice on how to minimise your impact on both local environments and communities.
- 5) Chimu Adventures' offices also take a number of sustainability measures including carbon offsets for company vehicles and most staff travel. Chimu Adventure's internal processes are also structured to create a paperless office and to reduce waste. There are also internal programmes to help staff minimise their carbon footprint such as our staff bike purchase assistance plan which encourages office staff to commute to work via bicycle. Currently almost half of our office based staff commute to work via bicycle.

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