

ARGENTINA - SOUTHERN EXPLORER: USHUAIA TO EL CHALTEN



INTRODUCTION

Explore the remote corners of Southern Patagonia on this 13 day journey. Undertake an incredible adventures of overwhelming natural beauty as you explore some of the finest national parks in all of South America. From Los Glaciares, home to some of the world's most stunning ice formations to Torres Del Paine, famous for its granite pillars, incredible mountain vistas and solitary lakes. This is a true adventure into one of the world's most southern regions.

ITINERARY

DAY 1: Arrival in Ushuaia

We begin our tour in the picturesque seaside city of Ushuaia, the most southerly city in the world. 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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DEPARTURE

12/11/2021, 12/12/2021,
09/02/2022

DURATION

13 Days

LOCATIONS

Ushuaia, Torres del Paine,
Punta Arenas, Tierra del
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DAY 1: Ushuaia

Ushuaia is the most southerly city in the world with a dramatic setting overlooking the Beagle Channel, surrounded by mountains. It is a major port for Antarctic bound vessels and an interesting city to explore. The Museo Marítimo y del Presidio de Ushuaia, (Maritime & the Prison of Ushuaia Museum), located in the former prison of Ushuaia in buildings dating back to 1906, is well worth a visit. Tierra del Fuego National Park, a short bus ride from Ushuaia was the first shoreline National Park to be established in Argentina. It is a rugged, mountainous park with great views of Lapataia Bay and dramatic scenery with waterfalls, mountains, glaciers and lakes including parts of Fagnano and Roca Lakes. There are many hiking trails within the park including the Coastal Path (Senda Costera) that connects Ensenada Bay to Lapataia Bay on Lago Roca and the park is home to many species of birds and animals. Meals: Dinner (D)



DAY 2: Ushuaia

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. 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 Pan American Highway is found more than 17000km/11000mi from where it begins Meals: Breakfast (B)



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DAY 3: Ushuaia - Cerro Sombrero

Our first big drive day sees us head over the Garibaldi Pass (500m/1500ft) and leave the mountains behind us. We pass the massive Lago Fagnano, the heart of the island and cross the border into Chile. After lunch, we visit a King Penguin colony. King Penguins are usually only found on sub Antarctic islands, such as the remote and difficult to access South Georgia and the Falkland Islands. Observing them in Tierra del Fuego, therefore, is a unique opportunity! We continue onto the tiny town of Cerro Sombrero surrounded by the steppe. Meals: (B), (L), (D)



DAY 4: Cerro Sombrero - Punta Arenas

Crossing the Straits of Magellan, we arrive into 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. You have the afternoon at leisure to explore the city. 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 5: Punta Arenas - Torres del Paine

Today we head to South Americas finest National Park, stopping before in the seaside town of Puerto Natales for lunch and supplies. Puerto Natales sitting right on the Ultima Esperanza, the Last Hope Sound and is a major gateway to the fjords of Chile. 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 most famous treks inside the park are: (a) Greys Glacier Hike (b) French Valley Hike (c) Los Torres 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. Weather plays a big part in whether these activities will be on offer. Please ask about our Torres Light Add-On. Meals: (B), (D)



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DAY 6: Torres del Paine

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. *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. Full walk takes approximately 8 - 9 hours return including time for lunch and depending on your ability/physical strength.

Meals: (B), (L), (D)



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DAY 7: Torres del Paine

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

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 El Calafate

Leaving this remarkable region, we cross at a remote border post into Argentina. 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)



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DAY 10: El Calafate - Perito Merino

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 leave early to have the area for just ourselves to enjoy, with no rush and plenty of time for bird and animal spotting, every time you want to stop for pictures you'll be able to. Along the way, we will 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 11: El Calafate - El Chalten

Today drive around the beautiful Lake Argentina to El Chalten. Enroute we will stop at a historic homestead saloon with some famous outlaw visitors. We will arrive to El Chalten, a small town nestled quietly under the imposing peak of Chalten (also known as Mount Fitzroy, named after the captain of the Beagle, who navigated Darwin's Expedition of the area in 1834). In the afternoon explore some of the great walking trails El Chalten is famous for. Discover great views of the peaks of Cerro Torre and Mount Fitz Roy as well as spectacular rivers, lakes and forests, and if you are lucky watch condors circling high above. There are many options available form short walk of less than an hour to longer half day hikes. Meals: (B), (L), (D)



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DAY 12: El Chalten

A full day hiking in the wonderful Los Glaciares National Park, (*Lago Torre hike is our preferred 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 included 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 over 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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DAY 13: Departure

Depart El Chalten with wonderful memories, and a new respect of our wonderful planet courtesy of Patagonia. Your tour ends after breakfast, with a shared transfer from El Chalten to El Calafate Airport. Please allow 3 hours for the transfer. 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.



INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation

Standard

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Inclusions	All accommodation in standard-superior hotels Guiding and leadership by experienced bilingual guides All national park entrance fees All transportation Exclusions Visa and reciprocity fees (if applicable) International flights Travel Insurance
Difficulty Rating	3 Light Adventure (High altitude in some areas)
Single Surcharge	Willing to share option guaranteed on select departures. Contact us for more information
Notes	Not Available
Price Dependent upon	Departure date, season and availability.

SUSTAINABILITY

Being environmentally accountable is a crucial part of our organisation. Chimu is currently striving towards using less paper, taking several initiatives to do so and tracking our progress along the way. Our goal: A paperless organisation. For this reason, all information given to you will be sent electronically. We encourage those who choose to travel with us to support our aspirations and actions and ask that you reconsider printing out documentation. To view these documents, you can download them to your iPad or portable computer before and during your trip.

Chimu is passionate and dedicated to sustainability measures and understands the crucial part sustainability plays within the tourism industry.

We use local guides and office staff to both maximise local employment opportunities and minimise carbon footprint. Local guides also ensure you benefit from the intimate knowledge, passion and culture of the country you're visiting. Our guides are all highly qualified (most with university degrees) or equip with many years of experience and are paid above the standard wage. Whether it be our knowledgeable local guides, locally produced meals or the transport on tour, we do not use imported goods when local products are available. We aim to minimise our impact on the environment and give as much back as possible to the communities we work in.

While visiting the many national parks, heritage sites, museums and landmarks our travellers are encouraged to explore whilst remaining culturally aware and sensitive. We further encourage you to buy appropriate souvenirs and discourage the buying of anything wrongfully made or taken from the environment i.e. shells and endangered species products. Information on how you can be environmentally conscious, and travel responsibly will be made available in our Travellers Guides and provided during your travels by guides and staff.

For more information on our sustainability policies, including how we are striving

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