

SOUTHERN EXPLORER: SMALL GROUP TOUR



INTRODUCTION

Explore remote southern Patagonia on this 10-day adventure. This small group tour is fantastic for photography, wildlife, hiking and getting off the beaten track with a small group of like minded travellers.


In Punta Arenas, delve into the local culture and history of the area, there are even replica models of ships including Charles Darwin's Beagle to explore. Discover some of South Americas finest national parks including Chile's famous Torres del Paine National Park, with its jagged, multilayered peaks, and the impressive array of animals found within the park like guanaco, rhea and puma. Visit Argentina's Los Glaciares National Park, where we listen and watch ice calving from Perito Moreno Glacier and hike to get fantastic views of Cerro Torre Mt Fitzroy from El Chalten.

Learn about life in and around these wild mountains, turquoise lakes and windswept steeps along the way. Visit a working estancia or ranch, to witness rural life, and savour a typical Patagonia BBQ. Explore the lands Tehuelche people, entering caves where thousands of years ago they left marks on the rocks in forms of rock paintings.

This is a tour of overwhelming natural beauty...a perfect sample of the wonders of Patagonia.

Please note: This tour requires a minimum of 6 guests to depart. We suggest you wait to book your international flights until the tour has met minimum numbers.

ITINERARY

TRIP CODE
LAVISEGT
DEPARTURE
24/10/2023, 06/11/2023, 24/11/2023, 27/12/2023, 16/01/2024, 02/02/2024, 23/02/2024, 22/03/2024
DURATION
10 Days
LOCATIONS
Patagonia, Chile, Argentina


SOUTHERN EXPLORER: SMALL GROUP TOUR

DAY 1: Arrival Punta Arenas

Join our small group tour, Southern Explorer in Punta Arenas Chile (flight to Punta Arenas not included) Punta Arenas is best accessed from Santiago (ask about our Santiago extension packages). Note this tour is part of our longer 18 day Wild Patagonia tour, but you may join for this part only. Flying into Punta Arenas allows us a birds eye view of the famous Magallen Straits. This historically important port town boomed during the late 1800s and early 1900s due to its strategic location on the sailing route for ships going from the east coast to the west coast of USA during the gold rush years. Many British and European immigrants made their fortunes with the introduction of sheep to the region. Starting with a humble 300 sheep brought in from the Islas Malvinas (Falkland Island) within in 20 years there were more than 2 million head of sheep. There is plenty to explore in your free time, including a walk along the costenera of the famous Straits of Magellan. Feeling the heavy sea air and blustery wind all around, you can gaze out in the waters and try to imagine how Magellan and his crew might have felt finding this passage of water, but not knowing where it would lead them. You might also spot dolphins or penguins and definitely plenty of sea bird life along the way. A short way out of town is the Noa Victoria museum. A local cartographer took on the personal challenge to build a life size replica of Magellan's ship, paying homage to the explorer's achievements. You will also find within the outdoor museum life sized replicas of the Ancud, (a Chilean schooner ship that sailed south through the southern fjords) and the James Caird, (the lifeboat used by Shackleton) and a replica of the Beagle, made famous by Charles Darwin. (A city tour with the Nao Victoria museum is included) Within the centre of the Punta Arenas there are various museums and commemorative statues dedicated to various people who have influenced the development of the city and region. **Please note depending on flight times our Punta Arenas tour may be done on the following morning** Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner



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DAY 2: Torres Del Paine National Park

Today we head towards Torres Del Paine, South America's finest National Park and a hiker's paradise. In this area are the colossal towers and horns of granite that have given the park worldwide fame. The park preserves numerous animals like guanacos, condors, ñandues (South American ostrich), foxes and the elusive puma. We stay at Hotel Las Torres, with its fantastic location inside Torres del Paine National Park, strategically placed at the entrance to the world famous trekking circuits, the W and the O. Each day you will be able to choose between an active excursion such as hiking one of the many great trails inside the park, or a lighter option opting to enjoy the park on foot or by horse or vehicle. The choice is yours! Note: These activities are hosted by the experience local guides, and you may be joined by other lodge guests during your day activities. There may be a navigation on offer, weather dependent, additional charge. Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner



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DAY 3: Torres del Paine National Park

Over the following days you will enjoy meals at our accommodation (or picnic lunches if out and about) and partake in your selected half day or full day activities that you have chosen locally. Enjoy short hikes to see its attractions such as the Nordenskjöld, Salto Grande Waterfalls, Pehoe Lake, and Lake Grey. Or spend time riding with Patagonian cowboys and girls, or take a van to visit local sights. With luck you will also be able to wildlife such as guanacos, Darwin Rheas and condors who call the park their home. During your stay admire the mighty Towers of Paine and Horns of Paine mountains which dominate horizon. Experience the grandeur and beauty for yourself and see why this national park is considered the crowning jewel of Patagonia. For those that love hiking there are some wonderful full day hikes including the famous Las Torres Hike on offer. Las Torres Hike (Difficult) *sample activity Hiking to view the iconic Las Torres (the Towers) is a challenging yet immensely satisfying hike, a highlight for all confident trekkers. The Towers are the three massive granite columns that encircle the smaller Torres Glacier. Starting from Estancia Cerro Paine we set off toward the valley crossing on an old suspension bridge over the Ascencio River. You will begin heading up a zigzag of marked slope and sparse vegetation for an hour or so along the side of one of the mountains. The path then then flattens out as you scale the side of the valley with a great river underneath you. Arriving at the refugio Chileno you can buy snacks and rest for a while and use the facilities. Leaving the refugio you start climbing again for about 1 hour crossing rivers and passing through a beautiful forest until you reach the foot of the moraine. The final 45 minutes are quite challenging as you scramble up rough paths between boulders to the base of the towers from where you have a wonderful view of the 3 granite pillars, draped with glaciers and the majestic emerald lake that shines below. After resting and having lunch in this extraordinary and unique place, we begin our return journey back down the mountain. Full walk takes approximately 8 - 9 hours return including time for lunch and depending on your ability/physical strength. 20Kms (12,5 Miles) - Elevation Gain: +/- 680m - Hiking Time: 8-9 Hrs Level: Moderate - Advanced Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



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DAY 6: El Calafate

Leaving early in the morning it is time to continue on with our adventure, as we head over the border. We will enter into the Steppe, this is Argentina biggest desert and the 8th biggest desert in the world. The landscape varies with tablelands and massifs dissected by rivers, valleys and canyons. The soil is filled with rich minerals that paint the layered land with colours of red, pink orange and yellow. As we drive across the plateau there are few small towns that pop up and will leave you wondering how people can live in this environment. In fact it is not uncommon for strong winds or even light snow to be present in this stretch of the drive if the region has a cold front coming through. As we descend down from the plateau the electric blue waters of the Lake Argentina can be seen from far away. On a crystal clear day you can even make out the silhouette of Mt Fitzroy, Cerro Torre and the entire southern Andes mountain peaks on the horizon. As we arrive into El Calafate you can feel the mix of an old farm frontier town with a modern tourism centre that delivers one of the biggest attractions in the region; Perito Moreno glacier. Tonight we enjoy dinner at a lovely Argentine steak house. Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner



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DAY 7: Perito Moreno Glacier

The Perito Moreno Glacier is one of the earth's most dynamic and accessible ice fields. 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. Visiting Perito Moreno glacier, we will have time to enjoy the glacier from a series of platforms and will then take a short boat trip along the south wall of the glacier. This is a wonderful way to get close to the glacier and appreciate its daunting size and power - a true highlight of Patagonia. If we are lucky we may witness huge chunks of ice breaking free crashing with a mighty roar into the water. After this amazing encounter we will visit Estancia Nibepo Aike which retains the essence of the old Patagonian ranches. It covers over 12,000 hectares at the foot of the Patagonian Andes and is dedicated to the production of cattle and sheep. It is an ideal place to dip into authentic Patagonian life through farm demonstrations and participating in ranch activities as well as optional hikes or horse riding. Before returning to El Calafate, we enjoy a typical Patagonian barbeque. Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner



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DAY 8: El Chalten

On our way to El Chalten today we will stop to discover some of the anthropology of the region, rediscovering the stories of the first expeditions and daring explorers that ventured into the unknown. We will explore the coast of the Argentino lake by jeep, to explore the lands and caves of the Tehuelche people. Discover caves where thousands of years ago the Tehuelche culture left its marks on the rocks in forms of rock paintings, which today we seek to interpret. Finally, the excursion culminates in another cave where lunch is served, a meal that will transport us to those times gone by. In the afternoon we will arrive in El Chalten, a small town nestled quietly under the imposing peak of Chalten (Mount Fitzroy). Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch



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DAY 9: El Chalten

El Chalten is known as the hiking capital of Argentina, so today we lace up our boots and to enjoy a guided hike, our plan is to do the famous Laguna Torre trek. We enter the Fitzroy River Valley and continue upstream - heading for its source. Here we encounter the first viewpoint located at the gorge of the Fitzroy River called Cascada Margarita. On a clear day, this panoramic view displays Mt Fitzroy, Cerro Torre, Cerro Solo and the Adela range. We continue along an undulating trail until we reach the Cerro Torre viewpoint, another opportunity to take in the Adela range and other granite needles. Then we head down into a plateau section, through a southern beech tree forest and along a trail to the glacier Lagune at the base of Cerro Torre. Often, we will find icebergs floating in the lagoon. (approx 7-8 hour return). Meals included: Breakfast, Boxed lunch



DAY 10: Departure El Calafate

Today we depart El Chalten with wonderful memories, and a new respect of our wonderful planet courtesy of Patagonia. Meals included: Breakfast While it is our intention to adhere to the itinerary and hotels described above, there is a certain amount of flexibility built into the itinerary and on occasion it may be necessary, or desirable to make alterations.



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INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation

Hotel & Lodge Stays

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Inclusions	Inclusions Small Group Tour - Guaranteed to depart fully guided with a minimum of 6 people, maximum of 20 Flight from Puerto Montt to Punta Arenas Airport transfers All entrance fees, national park fees on all day tours (unless otherwise stated) Meals as indicated
	Exclusions: Single room supplement International flights Visa & reciprocity fees (if applicable) Travel insurance Beverages Personal expenses including Laundry & Drinks Gratuities for tour guides & drivers Any items not mentioned as included
Difficulty Rating	3 (Active Adventure)
Single Surcharge	A single supplement surcharge applies and is subject to availability. Please contact us for more information. Same sex room share may be available. Please contact us for more information.
Notes	Prices are based on per person, twin share. Prices are correct at time of publishing but are subject to change at any time. All entrance fees are subject to change without prior notice. Please note: This tour requires a minimum of 6 guests to depart. We suggest you wait to book your international flights until the tour has met minimum numbers. We will advise you if the tour does not meet minimum numbers no later than 90 days prior to departure.
Price Dependent upon	Availability, seasonality and currency exchange rate at the time of booking.

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SUSTAINABILITY