

Chile & Argentina: Patagonia & Torres del Paine National Park

Tour-Only Itinerary

Pampas stretching as far as the eye can see, ancient caves where prehistoric animals left their bones—Patagonia has a timeless, boundless feel unlike anyplace else on earth. With horizons this vast, it's hard to know where to turn your gaze. Fortunately, your expert guides know just how to direct you. Above tower the imposing stone sentinels of Torres del Paine, while across the way dozens of condors wheel in flight, and a solitary guanaco stands silhouetted on the ridgeline. Whatever your pursuit—sharing a gaucho-style asado with your hosts on a 100,000-hectare working estancia; watching pink clouds of flamingos rise from a lonely lakeshore, or listening to the roar of ice slabs crashing down from the Perito Moreno Glacier—this Patagonia hiking tour delivers unforgettable visions of grandeur.

Highlights

- Marvel at jagged mountain massifs as you walk valley and mountain trails, from “the Horns” and “the Towers” to the Baguales Mountains.
- Spot astonishing wildlife in its natural habitat—eagles, flamingoes, guanacos, armadillos, and perhaps the elusive puma.
- Get a glimpse of Patagonian and gaucho life during stays at traditional, working estancias.
- Indulge in the finest Chilean and Argentinean cuisine, prepared with care using locally sourced ingredient

Activity Level

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate. Averaging 4 to 8 miles per day with ascents and descents, it offers options on most days. The terrain is varied – often hilly, uneven, single-track trails that can be rocky, hard-packed dirt, or sometimes soft ground over tufts of grass that can be uneven. Most trails are exposed with little coverage from the sun; Patagonia can be very windy and cold so dressing in layers is important. We share some ideas in the packing list you will receive.

DAY 1

Join your Chile & Argentina: Patagonia & Torres del Paine National Park tour. Travel to Torres del Paine. Welcome dinner

Flight from Santiago (SCL) to Puerto Natales or Punta Arenas. Rio Serrano flats; 3 – 4 miles, easy

Meet your entire group at 8:30 a.m. at the Hotel Magnolia lobby. Your guide will be dressed in a Country Walkers shirt. After brief introductions your adventure begins.

Please note: Due to limited flight service to Puerto Natales, some departures may fly to the city of Punta Arenas instead.

Then a scenic drive will take you to your lodge in Torres del Paine. After you settle in, join a walk along the river flats of the Rio Serrano. Leaving right from the lodge, this walk traces the Rio Nutria. Admire lovely river views and, as you make your way through some stretches of sylvan forest, enjoy sightings of fantastic birdlife, perhaps the upland goose, great grebe, and ringed kingfisher.

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2

Beach walk to Glacier Grey overlook

3 miles, easy to moderate. Rio Pingo; 4 miles, easy to moderate, 600 ft. elevation gain & loss

Sunrises over the Paine massif are impossible to beat, as you'll discover throughout your stay. Torres del Paine National Park was first brought to the world's attention in 1880 when Scottish traveler Lady Florence Dixie chronicled her adventure here. In her book *Across Patagonia*, she described the three distinct torres, or towers, associated with the region as "Cleopatra's Needles." By some accounts, she and her fellow travelers were the first foreign tourists to lay eyes on these geological wonders.

After a hearty breakfast, head to the shores of Grey Lake, where a two-mile walk along the scenic beach starts your day off on the right foot. Continue your hike by crossing over the rushing Rio Pingo, thick with glacial sediment, before winding through an ancient forest of lenga trees (deciduous trees native to the southern Andes). The trail emerges on a rocky beach and follows a narrow spit of land crossing Grey Lake. It culminates on the tip of a peninsula offering panoramic views of the lake, icebergs, and the lake's source, Grey Glacier. Return along the same trail and enjoy a lovely lunch at the Lago Grey Hotel, with sweeping views of the lake. After lunch, embark on an afternoon walk along the Rio Pingo.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3

Fauna Trail

4.5 miles easy to moderate, 650 ft. elevation gain, 750 ft. elevation loss. Guided historical walk at Estancia Cerro Guido; 1 mile, easy

Cross the park on a one-hour drive, heading toward the eastern pampas. Lakes of turquoise and green, and the famed jagged peaks of the Torres massif, add drama and wonder to your morning. Upon arrival at the national park entrance at Porteria Sarmiento, you set out across the expansive grasslands of the park's southern reaches, heading toward another park entrance at Laguna Amarga. This little-known walking path attracts few visitors, which makes for excellent opportunities to spot the local wildlife. Herds of guanaco reside here, and they show little fear of humans. Look to the sky to catch a glimpse of condors taking flight, or gaze to the ground to see foxes or armadillos scurrying along. With a breathtaking backdrop of the staggering Paine Massif, this is the Patagonia that you've dreamt of—a vast natural haven at the end of the world. You may detour about 45 minutes to view ancient cave paintings dating back some 6,000 years.

Following today's invigorating walk, continue east toward the Patagonian steppe, stretching between the Andes and the Atlantic Ocean. Your destination is a working estancia, where you spend two nights. Sheep, horseback riders, and infinite skies might remind you of the American West, but the culture that thrives here is distinctly Chilean. A tour of the property highlights its rich history, sheep-shearing facility, horse stables, vegetable garden, and greenhouse.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4

Laguna Azul

3 – 4 miles, easy to moderate options

Today you awake to a hearty farm breakfast and then set out for Laguna Azul on the eastern side of Torres del Paine National Park. On the way, you might spot local wildlife, such as guanacos, condors, armadillos, and maybe even a puma. At Laguna Azul, a dazzling cobalt lake nestled in a glacial valley, you'll hike the lakeshore and take in one of the best views of the "Towers" of Torres del Paine. Gaze up at the striking view of the towers against the sky, their peaks reflected in the blue waters of the lake. This is the same view that impressed Lady Florence Dixie in 1879 when she first laid eyes on Patagonia's majestic *torres*.

From Laguna Azul, you can choose to ascend to the Sierra Masle Lookout. As you climb, watch for the guanacos and local birdlife. A large, erratic boulder left behind by the glaciers marks the lookout, where there's a striking view of the granite *torres* with Laguna Azul shimmering below. From this vantage point the towers look slim and slender, which inspired Lady Florence Dixie to give them the name "Cleopatra's Needles".

Back at the overnight ranch, you'll experience more of Patagonian farm life up close. This evening, settle in for asado prepared the traditional *gaucho* way—lamb roasted over open coals served beneath a canopy of stars.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5

Flamingo Lagoon

3 – 4 miles, easy

Travel into Argentina today. There's a lot of land to cover, but the long drive (approximately five hours including stops and the border crossing) gives you ample opportunity to take in the vastness of the Patagonian steppe. All in all, it's a spectacular morning of breathtaking vistas. You head north, paralleling soaring Andean peaks, on the legendary Route 40, the longest continual road in Argentina and one of the longest in the world. Before formalities at the border of La Esperanza, there is time for a coffee and souvenir shopping. After the break, you continue on to your next lodge at the edge of Glaciers National Park, or Los Glaciares, home to one of the largest ice caps in the world. Its massive expanse feeds 47 glaciers, 13 of which flow toward the Atlantic Ocean.

A tasty, albeit, late lunch is served upon your arrival. Once you're finished, you may choose to take a dip in the hotel's swimming pool, sink into a leather couch in one of the elegant lounges with floor to ceiling picture windows, or join your guides on a walk from the lodge to a nearby lagoon. The lagoon's flocks of bright pink flamingos are an astounding contrast to the muted colors of the steppe around you. Dinner this evening is served in the hotel's elegant restaurant.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6

Cerro Frías

3 miles, moderate, 750 ft. elevation gain. Perito Moreno Glacier; 2 miles, easy

After breakfast, you may spend the morning as you wish. Perhaps walk right from your hotel up a Cerro Frías footpath, where astonishing views of Lago Argentino and the Andes Range unfold before you. The Paine Massif rises in the south and the stunning "needles" of Mount Fitz Roy soar up to 11,000 feet in the north. You can also see the Baguelas Range on the Chilean border. If you prefer, saddle up for a horseback riding excursion, included with your stay. Or just relax and enjoy the offerings of this 5-star property.

You depart later this afternoon for a thrilling excursion to the Perito Moreno Glacier. The timing of our visit means the day-trippers have left, so you're able to enjoy this spectacular mammoth of nature in relative solitude. The face of the Perito Moreno is about three miles wide; it averages 240 feet in height above

Lago Argentino's surface and plunges more than 300 feet below the water. It advances more quickly than most glaciers, creaking and splitting as it goes, calving great chunks of ice into the lake. Even if you have seen other glaciers before, Perito Moreno will long linger in your memory. It's the perfect place to end your Patagonia adventure. Tonight, enjoy a culinary feast of local specialties for your farewell dinner.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7

Your Chile & Argentina: Patagonia & Torres del Paine National Park tour concludes

After an included breakfast this morning travel to the El Calafate airport for an early flight.

Included Meals: Breakfast

What's Included

Tour Only

Exceptional boutique accommodations

17 on-tour meals: 6 breakfast, 5 lunches, 6 dinners

Local guides with you throughout tour

Local wine and/or beer with dinner

Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary

Telescopic walking sticks provided on tour