



Patagonia Exploration.

The Paine region of Patagonia is one of the most stunning places on earth. Declared a World Heritage site it combines steep towering granite spires set amidst blue lakes and verdant beech forest. The heart of the area is a granitic area of rock that is capped by black metamorphic rock. Andean condors soar above the towers and guanaco (a llama like animal) graze the flatlands. Seldom seen, but present, are the elusive mountain lions that prey upon the guanaco. These are some of the most fantastic mountains everywhere and a magical and spectacular place that should not be missed and one that anyone who loves the wild places should visit.

Our program here hits the highlights of the area. We attempt to combine both hiking, exploring and climbing to make a trip that is different and unique. We try to go to places where others do not and to see things that other groups are unable to. Our groups are small and allow us to travel quickly and efficiently and numerous past trips allow us to streamline the travel arrangements and to maximize the time spent in the mountains. We believe that we can offer the best trip possible and to give you a well rounded experience of this fantastic area.

The trip is a fourteen day itinerary which should give time to explore and climb, but everything depends upon the weather. Patagonia is known as the home of the wind, and bad weather is the norm and not the exception. But past experience has shown us that January often has spells of good weather and should give us the time to complete our itinerary.

Itinerary:

This outline is general since on a trip of this nature it is necessary to be flexible and to work with the dictates of being in a South American country where things just do not run the same way as one might be used to in the USA.

Access to this area is very straightforward from Punta Arenas and takes us across the pampas of southern Patagonia via the maritime town of Puerto Natales and into the park.

Day 0 Arrive in Punta Arenas, a small town at the southern tip of Chile and the capital of the Magallanes Province. Punta Arenas lies on the Straits of Magellan and has most of the amenities we need to equip ourselves for the mountains.

Day 1 Travel to Torres del Paine National Park. This is a three to four hour trip via private transportation. We will have time to sightsee and to visit the fishing town of Puerto Natales. Our drive takes us below the incredible Cuernos and through regions of abundant wildlife with guanaco (the wild equivalent of llamas) and a variety of birdlife. We will camp alongside Lago Pehoe towards the end of the road.

Day 2 We will meet our horse transportation early in the morning and hike up the Rio Pingos to a camp alongside of Lago Pingo. Above the lake the Zapato Glacier leads up onto the icecap and slopes above camp take us to the Tyndall Glacier which also drains the icecap.

Days 3-5 We will explore and perhaps climb some peaks if the weather allows.

Days 6 We will return to the roadhead and take the new catamaran across Lago Pehoe to camp at the far eastern side of the lake.

Day 7 We will take a hike over the hill to the end of Lago Grey where Glacier Grey spills into the lake and then return to camp.

Day 8-9 We will head off around the lake to camp at Campo Italiano. This will be camp for a day or two as we explore up into the French Valley with the spires and peaks of the Fortress, the Sword and the huge Paine Grande. If we can we will climb up the glacier to the pass that allows us to look down into the Silencio Valley and over the massive South Tower of Paine.

Day 10 We will travel around the lake to the hut alongside Lago Nordenskjold.

Day 11-13 We continue around to the Ascencio Valley. The climbers camp in the valley here will be our basecamp and from here we will climb to the upper Ascencio Valley below the towers. On another day we will climb into the Silencio Valley on the other side of the towers and view them from that side.

Day 14 End of the trip. Our arrieros come in and pick up everything and we head back to Punta Arenas to relax and to celebrate with fine Chilean wines and the seafood that Punta Arenas is famous for.

The trip back to the USA starts on the following day.

Prerequisites: It will be ideal if you have done an SMC trip previously. Since this is an extended trip it is important that everyone gets along well and is compatible. If you have not done a trip with us before we will talk with you extensively. The climbing portions of the trip are straightforward, but do require some prior experience on crampons and with and iceaxe. However if you do not have these skills you can take a hiking alternative that day.

Dates and Prices: Check the brochure and web site. Should minimum participant numbers not be reached you will be given the option of paying our private rate, rescheduling, or cancelling. Price includes guiding, permits, horses and mules for transportation of equipment, camping fees, park entry fees, hotels in Punta Arenas, local transportation, boat fees, all necessary group climbing gear, tents, kitchen gear and food in the mountains. It does not include in town restaurant meals or transportation to Punta Arenas, personal and gratuities.

If our scheduled dates do not fit into your plans please call us to arrange a private trip at dates of your convenience.

Notes: Patagonia is renowned as being the home of the wind. The weather can vary from bad to abysmal. So keep this in mind when you venture here since a big part of the game is waiting for clear weather. Patience is the key. There are plenty of hiking and exploring options but once it turns fine we move. Luck plays a big part and all we can do is hope for a nice fine day. But when it does clear there is truly no place on earth that comes close to the stunning beauty of this area.

Equipment List for Patagonia Exploration

This list provides you with suggestions for lightweight, compact equipment. If you have any questions don't hesitate to call and ask our advice. There will be the opportunity to leave some items behind in hotels when we head into the mountains. Weather in Patagonia can be bad, but not extremely cold. It is not as far south as you might think, at latitude 50, the same as the US/Canada border.

Essentials

- Internal frame backpack of about 3-4000 cubic inches
- Duffle bag for putting things into for mule transportation
- Sleeping bag. This should be rated to about 20°F. If it bulky put it in a compression stuff sac
- Sleeping pad system. A foam pad and a Thermarest works best. Bring a Thermarest repair kit.

Hiking Essentials

- Poles, telescoping probe type are best.
- Hiking boots. A lightweight pair with good ankle support is needed. Do not use too light a pair since there will be rough off trail hiking.
- Hiking clothing, shorts and long sleeve shirts.
- Small daypack for hiking with

Climbing Essentials

- Mountaineering boots. Temperatures are not extreme but the boots must be warm enough for your feet. A lightweight pair of plastics or good leather boots is appropriate.
- Ice axe. A general purpose 70cm axe or so
- Crampons. An all round mountaineering type rather than a rigid technical crampons that "balls up" is preferable.
- Harness*. An adjustable leg loop type such as the Black Diamond Bod or Wild Things Expresso will accommodate layering changes.
- Belay/rappell device
- Four locking carabiners
- Four regular carabiners
- Prussik system

Clothing

- 4 pair synthetic liner socks
- 4 pair heavier synthetic or wool blend socks
- Gaiters for both climbing and hiking
- Long underwear top and bottom. 2 pairs. Capilene or some other synthetic is most desirable
- Warm pants. Tights or Expedition weight Capilene
- Warm shirt. Expedition Capilene or light Synchronilla
- Another fuzzy sweater top such as synchronilla
- Pile jacket
- Pile pants or bibs. 200-300 weight.
- Light down jacket; synthetic fill is second choice.
- Good quality Gore-tex rain/wind pants and rain jacket.

- Warm hat
- Balaclava; silk and/or pile
- Visor hat (for sun)
- Bandanna for something for facial and neck sun protection
- Liner gloves 2 pair for one set gets wet
- Shell gloves
- Around town clothing for eating out etc

Etc.

- Sunglasses, high quality with keeper leash. The type with side shields are recommended. If you wear corrective glasses you might want a second pair
- Goggles for bad conditions
- Ear plugs for noisy tents
- Personal kit; tooth brush...
- Sunscreen and lip screen. SPF 30+. Make sure the lip stuff actually contains a sunscreen. A 2 oz bottle will be sufficient
- Two 1-quart plastic water bottles
- Personal first aid kit, foot care, and any required medications. We will have a large group medical kit; go light on your own kit. Bring plenty of blister treatment items.
- Eating and drinking items
- Swiss Army type knife
- Camera, film and spare batteries
- Books, games etc
- A Crazy Creek chair can ease back pain in camp

Food

- We will provide breakfast, dinner and lunch but bring some snack items like cliff bars, power bars, gorp concoctions. A days worth for most people would be 2 bars, 3 ounces of gorp, and perhaps a candy bar. Don't over do it.

Shared Equipment Provided by SMC

- Shelter. We will provide lightweight, storm worthy tents. If you have your favorite, by all means bring it, but we do want to pair people up where possible to reduce weight.
- Group cooktent
- Stove. We provide MSR Whisperlite stoves.
- Cookwear.
- Group first aid kit.