



## Patagonian Icecap Traverse

There are some things that climbers and explorers dream of. We all read books and let our imaginations fly with those legends of the past who went places and saw new vistas for the first time. Some of us still want to emulate these first explorers and to follow in their footsteps and see if we are made of the same stuff as they were. In this case the early pioneers of this area date from 1913 when the Argentine scientific expedition of Frederico Reichert were the first to set foot on the icecap. In the 1930s the Salician priest Alberto De Agostino started a series of explorations that continued to occupy him for years. (One has to wonder if he was really looking for souls to save out here, or if it was just a good excuse to get out and to explore). Later came the redoubtable Eric Shipton and Bill Tillman, the English climbers who traveled in the Himalaya and when that got too tame, retreated to the untamable wildness of Patagonia.

For us we now have high tech clothing and hardware, but the climate remains the same.; the strongest winds in the world, and some of the worst weather anywhere. But when the weather clears this is a unique and special location. The largest icecap outside of the Antarctic and some of the worlds most fantastic peaks. We will venture into the incredible Cirque of the Altars where the granite spires of Cerro Torre, Torre Egger and Cerro Stanhardt reach their ice encrusted heights into the sky. There are few words to describe the feeling of being in such a place. This is a place that man will be unable to tame and any trip here will remain a unique undertaking.

**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. The trip is a twelve 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.

Day 0 Arrive in El Calafate.

Day 1 First actual day of the trip. We will shuttle to El Chalten the dusty outpost below Fitzroy. Here we will continue to our basecamp at Piedra de Fraile, a small in holding of private land within Los Glacieres National Park.

Days 2 We will carry our first load up to the Passo Marconi at the edge of the icecap and return to Piedra de Fraile. This will involve a river crossing and carrying packs over glacial moraines and loose rock with no to little trail.

Days 3 Move camp up the Passo Marconi and prepare to travel out onto the icecap. This is a huge expanse of ice which we hope to find snow covered and so allowing us easy travel on snowshoes. In the distance is the remote Vulcan Lautoro and far off the Pacific Ocean.

Day 4 We will head south with the wind at our backs. To the west is the Cordon Marconi with jagged peaks encrusted in ice and rime mushrooms. We head past the end of the Cordon and set up camp near the Cirque of the Altars behind huge boulders and moraines.

Day 5 We hope for fine weather this day which will allow us to explore up into the cirque. These are some of the largest granite walls on earth and the ghostly ice towers and mushrooms lend them an other worldly appearance. It was from here that Italian Carlo Ferrarri accomplished the first ascent to the very summit of Cerro Torre.

Day 6 We continue southwards passing the Cordon Adela and pass out onto the bare ice of the Viedma Glacier.

Day 7 We leave the glacier and cross what will seem like endless moraine to the Passo Del Viento (Pass of the Winds). We cross this and descend a small glacier, circle around Lago Torro and reach the shelter of the beech forest.

Day 8 We return to Chalten. The hike is through lovely beech forest and open meadows with expansive views over Lago Viedma and the pampas that stretches to the Atlantic Ocean. Evening finds us back in Chalten relaxing with a well deserved dinner and fine Argentine wine.

Days 9-13 These are our in hand days for sitting out storms and waiting for clear weather.

Day 14 We return to the Argentine town of Calafate.

Day 15 Return home. (If you have to. If you want, stay longer).

**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 trip involves strenuous hiking across uneven terrain and glaciated travel. You need to have prior ice experience since we will be crossing bare glacial ice that requires familiarity with crampon techniques. On a trip of this nature it is a great advantage to have a cohesive team that gets along under adversity and enjoy it (well, at least sort of).

**Dates and Prices:** Check the latest brochure, call us or go to our web site for dates and rates. 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, tents, kitchen gear and food in the mountains, transportation to and from the mountains and group climbing equipment. It does not include in town restaurant meals or air flights to Calafate, personal expenses and gratuities.

# Equipment List for Patagonia Icecap Expedition

This list provides you with suggestions for lightweight, compact equipment. If you have any questions don't hesitate to call and ask our advice. 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 Espresso 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.