



Takes you to....

Patagonia

Torres del Paine & Fitz Roy

For

WILDERNESS & TRAVEL MEDICINE



TRIP SUMMARY

Patagonia, the land of wonders, is a region taking up most of Southern Argentina and Southern Chile. The region features a glacier-dotted mountainous interior, unique coastal wildlife and amazing Andean national parks. The mountains and lakes in Patagonia are also some of the most beautiful in the world. This adventure offers trekking and touring through some of the most famous and breathtaking places in Patagonia.

Glacier Perito Moreno: It's walls tower over two hundred vertical feet (forty meters) from the ground, where the ice meets the Lago Argentino, or Lake Argentino. At this height, equivalent to that of a fifteen-story building, the glacier maintains a commanding presence for approximately five kilometers of horizontal distance. At times the glacier will form an imposing panoramic wall, stretching as far as the eye can see in either direction. Unlike nearly every other glacier on the planet, which over time, recede and dwindle in size, the Perito Moreno formation actually swells with each passing day. Deemed an "advancing glacier," the ice is continually growing and expanding outward, gradually occupying more and more territory. This undeniable physical beauty is only amplified when one learns of the scientific significance that the formation brings to Patagonia.

Mountain FitzRoy: The world renowned FitzRoy rises eleven thousand feet into the air and proclaims its greatness over the surrounding ice lands. The FitzRoy mountain range is visible for hundreds of miles, and the village of El Chaltén is blessed with this excellent view.

Cerro Torre: It is called the tower for its sharp spires and subtle silhouette. Higher than FitzRoy, it is perhaps the most well known mountain of the southern Patagonian range. The magnificent mountain is composed of four granite needles that form a complexity of rare beauty and harmony.

Torres del Paine National Park: A spectacular park internationally renowned as one of the most beautiful, unspoiled, and remote places on earth. The park is comparable to the U.S.'s Yellowstone or Yosemite. The 450,000-acre park is an amazing biosphere recognized as a World Heritage site in 1978 by UNESCO. Truly a hikers dream!

Some of these spots have been a well-kept secret and are just now being discovered. This Patagonia region is without a doubt one of the best trekking destinations in the world.

Included in trip

- Lodging (based on 2 people sharing)
- Meals (there are a few meals not included, look at itinerary for specifics. Drinks not included)
- Guide for the whole trip
- Private transfers
- All navigations described in program
- Park entrances

Not Included in Trip

- Airfare
- Travel Insurance
- Drinks
- Single supplements
- Tips

ITINERARY SNAPSHOT

*Lodging may be changed if needed due to availability, but will be comparable to those noted.

Day 1	Meet guide at Punta Arenas airport and transfer to Hotel. Explore Punta Arenas and enjoy the warming hospitality of the Hotel. (D)
Day 2	We will set off by private bus to Torres Del Paine National Park (5hrs), stopping for lunch in the small town of Puerto Natales. We will arrive at our Eco base camp for the next 4 nights. Here we discover the most beautiful treasures of Torres del Paine NP, with easy and active programs, while enjoying superb comfort and ease at the new sustainable EcoCamp's Suite Domes. Breathtaking views of the Torres from your doorstep. The next 4 days you will have an option of easy or more strenuous hikes. The three most impressive, scenic and famous hikes in Torres Del Paine will be offered. (Grey Glacier, the Mighty Torres and the French Valley. There will also be less strenuous options offered. Not necessarily in the order below) (B+L+D)
Day 3	Hiking options in Torres Del Paine – Today's trek is spectacular! You will view the 3 pink granite towers with its glacial lake below that made the park famous. (7 hours). Return to Eco Camp. There will be a less strenuous trekking option. (B+L+D)
Day 4	Hiking options in Torres Del Paine. Trek along enchanting Lake Grey (3-4 hours, 11km) with magnificent views of Glacier Grey and floating icebergs. Then board the Grey II boat, 2 hours navigation on this magical lake full of icebergs circling around in front of the glacier. Return to Eco Camp (B+L+D)
Day 5	Hiking Options in Torres Del Paine. Transfer by van across the park to Lake Pehoe. (1hr). We will cross Lake Pehoe by catamaran and then begin the trek to the French Valley. Return to Eco Camp. (B+L+D)
Day 6	Today we will continue across the Patagonian steppes to the town of El Calafate. It's a half day drive with plenty of stops to stretch our legs. (B+L+D)
Day 7	Tour of Glacier Perito Moreno, including boat trip. One the most spectacular glaciers in the Southern Patagonian ice field. We then make the scenic drive to El Chaltén. El Chaltén is the gateway to northern Glacier National Park. From town and our hotel there are impressive views of Rio de las Vueltas and the famous FitzRoy Massif (11,703'). Overnight at Destino del Sur, our base camp for the remainder of the trip (B+L+D)
Day 8	Transfer to start of trail at Hosteria El Pilar (17 km from town). Today we will trek and explore panoramic views of the Piedras Blancas glacier. Like every day, there will be an option for a soft activity and a hard activity. Serious trekkers can reach "Laguna de Los Tres", the best panoramic point of the Fitz Roy! (B+L+D)
Day 9	Full day trek to Cerro Torre (B+L)
Day 10	Hike to Pampa de las Carretas where you will encounter beautiful panoramic views of the Fitz Roy and Torre hills. (B+L+D)
Day 11	Choose your own adventure today! You will have the choice of 2 hikes, one to the Diablo Laguna and the other to Laguna Verde and Azul. Farewell dinner. (L+D)
Day 12	Transfers to FTE for your flight back home, at any time.

(Meals included: B= Breakfast, L= Lunch, D= Dinner)

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1

Meet guide at Punta Arenas airport and transfer to Hotel Los Hielos for dinner and orientation. Explore Punta Arenas on your own. (D)

Day 2

In the morning, you will be picked up from your hotel in Punta Arenas and driven to EcoCamp Patagonia, located in the world-famous Torres del Paine National Park. This is a long travel day but we will stop in the beautiful, rugged town of Puerto Natales for lunch. The drive takes us across the wind-swept Patagonian steppe which gets more and more dramatic as we get closer to the park. We will stop a few times to stretch our legs and take photos of the magnificent scenery. We are likely to come across herds of guanaco (a wild relative of the llama), and the occasional rhea (looks like an ostrich).

We will arrive at the amazing EcoCamp Patagonia, nestled in the heart of Torres del Paine National Park and with a prime view of the majestic Torres. Sunset is usually around 10:30 pm during the summer months, meaning that there will still be enough daylight for you to admire a stunning view of the “Torres” if the skies are clear. We will gather in the main Dome for a welcome Pisco Sour toast and an overview of the hiking adventure to come. Overnight Ecocamp Patagonia Domes.

(B +L+D)

More info on our base camp for the next 4 nights

Our Suite Domes are comfortable 28mt2/ 300 ft2 tented igloo-type double domes built the same way as the ancient native Kaweska's dwellings. Its structure produces minimal environmental impact while providing an efficient thermal and wind resistant unit, with great exposure to nature in the most magnificent Patagonian setting.

Each dome has a private bathroom, comfortable double or twin beds, and it is heated by a modern low-emission wood stove. In addition, every dome has its own composting device to process waste. Electricity is generated with a micro hydro turbine and solar panels.

EcoCamp's Suite domes are located in a Lenga (beech) forest next to the existing standard domes but allowing enough distance so as to create a separate and independent atmosphere with more refinement and comfort. The domes are set up with enough space between them to provide adequate intimacy and introspection.



Day 3 (you will have options for the next three days – not necessarily in the order below)

Today we'll hike from Paine Grande Lodge along the shores of mountain-lined Lake Pehoe to the northern end of glacial Lake Grey. We'll enjoy a picnic lunch before boarding the boat that sails to the blue face of Glacier Grey. You'll have lots of time to marvel at this calving glacier before the boat ride across Lake Grey with its floating pieces of ice. Your clothes and personal belongings are once again transported separately from the lodge in duffel bags. From Lake Grey's southern end we transfer to the EcoCamp. If the weather conditions do not allow us to navigate Lake Grey, we'll instead hike to Glacier Grey. Then at Pudeto we'll

Trip is arranged, guided, and/or outfitted, or subcontracted, by Bio Bio Expeditions.
Wilderness and Travel Medicine, LLC is responsible only for the educational content of the CME course.

board the catamaran to cross Lake Pehoe. From there, we'll take a short drive back to Cascada EcoCamp where we'll enjoy the night. Overnight at EcoCamp. (B+L+D)

Walking duration: 2 hours.

Walking distance: 4 km / 2.5 miles.

Boat ride on Grey Lake: 2 hours round trip.

Max Altitude point: 800 feet

Day 4

Time for a great breakfast and lots of enthusiasm! Our goal is to complete the most famous trekking trail in Torres del Paine NP. We walk from the campsite towards Hostería Las Torres and connect with the winding uphill path to Ascencio Valley – the valley which supports the eastern face of the Towers' base. Dry mountain spots, beech forests and small rivers are passed along the scenic walk into the valley.



It's not a difficult walk, but energy should nevertheless be saved for the final challenge: the moraine. This mass of boulders is the last guardian before our face-to-face meeting with the uplifting Torres del Paine. The moraine is sufficiently steep to consider doing it slowly and with an adequate amount of precaution. After a considerable effort, the Towers come into full view, rising majestically before us with the glacial lake visible below. This is one of the most breathtaking sights of the world! The famous Torres del Paine (2,900 m / 9,400 ft) consist of three gigantic granite monoliths, the remains of a great cirque sheared away by the forces of glacial ice. Is there any better place on this planet to have lunch? Of course! But since we are in Patagonia, at the feet of the mighty Torres del Paine, we will enjoy life, the view, and a bite to eat! Once everyone is ready, we backtrack along the same trail through Ascencio Valley, and return to the EcoCamp. Overnight at EcoCamp (B+L+D)

Trekking duration: 10 hours round trip.

Trekking distance: 21 km / 13 miles round trip.

Max Altitude point: 3000 feet

Day 5

After breakfast, we start our day driving towards Pudeto dock, located by the shores of Pehoe Lake. Once there we board the catamaran that will take us to the northern west sector of the Lake from where we will start the challenging trek to Valle Frances (French Valley), taking a steep trail that goes into the very heart of the Paine Massif. How deep we go depends on our groups' rhythm.

An active walk leads us to the hanging bridge over the French River, located at the foot of the south-east face of the Massif. From this point, we can enjoy our first truly wonderful view and then continue up the trail until reaching the upper prospects of the valley. The entire group of geological formations of the high valley can be admired here: Hoja (Blade), Máscara (Mask), Espada (Sword), Catedral (Cathedral), Aleta de Tiburón (Shark's Fin) and the magnificent Fortaleza! (Fortress). It is time to have a picnic and recover from the walk.

Overnight Eco Camp. (B+L+D)

Boat ride on Pehoe Lake: 30 minutes each way.

Trekking duration: 6 hours round trip.

Trekking distance: 11 km / 7 miles round trip.

Max Altitude point: 2250 feet

Day 6

This is a travel day as we make our way from one spectacular region of Patagonia to another. An early departure from the Eco Camp and then a long drive to the remote and desolate international border outpost. We will check out of Chile, check into Argentina. Border crossings can be slow and the distance traveled is long so be sure to have a good book in your daypack.

We arrive at our hotel in the lovely town of El Calafate in the late afternoon. El Calafate sits on the shores of the massive aqua blue Lago Argentino. The town is named after the Calafate berry which is abundant in Patagonia. It is said that if you eat the Calafate berry you will always return to Patagonia! We will meet in the evening for a festive welcome dinner and discussion of the upcoming adventures and itinerary. It is fascinating to take note of the cultural differences between Chile and Argentina. Overnight at Hotel Hielos. (B+L+D)

Day 7

After breakfast we will begin our tour to Glacier Perito Moreno, approx. 1.5 hour drive. This is one of the most spectacular glaciers in the Southern Patagonian ice field and is one of the a very few glaciers that is actually advancing instead of receding. The park has miles of terraces that crisscross in front of different sections of the glacier - you may even be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of ice calving into the lake! You will have plenty of time to pace yourself and walk the terraces stopping for photos, listening to the glacier calve or just to admire the grandeur of the ancient ice. We take it one step further and board the "Safari Nautico" catamaran to navigate close to the walls of the glacier, getting the closest view possible.



On our 2.5 hour drive to El Chalten we will have plenty of stops to stretch our legs and enjoy all the scenic viewpoints. This is a remote corner of Patagonia, but thanks to the growing interest in mountaineering and hiking this town (with less than 350 year- round residents) has sprung up in recent years. El Chaltén is the gateway to Northern Glacier National Park. From town there are impressive views of Rio de Las Vueltas and the famous FitzRoy Massif (11,703'). A massive 40 percent of this park is covered in ice fields and there are 47 glaciers. We'll have the afternoon free to relax and perhaps see a bit of the town. We will spend the next 5 nights at our hiking base, the Hotel Destino Sur. (B+L+D)



Day 8

Every morning at the Destino del Sur Hotel we will enjoy a sumptuous breakfast buffet. As we prepare for the day's activities, the hotel provides us with an abundant sack lunch to pack in our daypacks. This includes a sandwich, fruit and chocolate. If you have a favorite type of energy bar we recommend that you bring a supply as this area of Patagonia does not have the same sort of energy/protein bars we are accustomed to at home.

The group will take a transfer from the hotel to the trailhead at Hosteria El Pilar (17 km from the town). There are multiple options for distance on this hike so you may prefer to return to town for some time souvenir shopping or enjoy a delicious coffee and pastry while writing in your journal about the adventure thus far.

Shorter hike: Hike up the Rio Blanco to the panoramic point of the Piedras Blancas glacier and back to El Pilar. Transfer will be waiting for return to El Chalten. Trekking duration: approximately 4 hours.

More strenuous activity: Continue hiking from the panoramic point of Piedras Blancas glacier to Poicenot campsite which is famous amongst climbers that are attempting to summit Fitzroy. This is a loop trek returning to El Chalten on the Laguna Capri trail. Depending on the group's stamina, it is possible to continue up to "Laguna De Los Tres" (the best panoramic point of the Fitz Roy massif). Overnight & dinner at the Hotel Destino Sur (B+L+D)

Trekking duration: 6 hours (approximately 8 hours to Laguna de los Tres)

Day 9

Trekking to Cerro Torre. We start with a short uphill section until reaching the first viewpoint. From here the Cerro Torre and valley entirely visible in its entirety. For those willing to walk further, our guide leads you to Laguna Torre, approximately 9km away from town. The trail runs through a glacier-originated valley. The lagoon features the Torre Glacier calving on the far side, and the Cerro Torre group & spires rising in the background. Overnight at the Hotel Destino Sur (B+L+D)

Soft activity: 3 hours trekking duration

Hard activity: 6-7 hours trekking duration

Day 10

After breakfast, we will prepare for our hike to Pampa de las Carretas, which affords a beautiful and panoramic view of Fitz Roy and Cerro Torre. We walk through town from our hotel and begin on the Laguna Toro trailhead. After a 2 hour gradual ascent through lenga (birch) forest we reach the first look out of Cerro Fitz Roy, Cerro Torre and Cerro Huemul. Once above the tree-line, there is an area where fossils such as ammonites and belemnites may be found in the creek bed. This is a spectacular look-out (if the weather is agreeable!). There is an option for hiking a steep, scree trail up a volcanic cinder cone for an even more dramatic view. Return to El Chalten by the same trail. Overnight at the Hotel Destino Sur.

Trekking duration: 8 hours (There is an option for a less strenuous hike)

Day 11

As this is the last hiking day of your trip, and sometimes people are tired from all the hiking throughout the trip, we have two different difficulty options and you can decide the night before which one you prefer. Both hikes originate in Estancia Los Huemules, a private natural reserve on the way to Lago del Desierto, 17km away from El Chaltén.

The harder option is a 6 hour trek to the Diablo Laguna.

The easier option is about a 2 hour hike to the Laguna Verde and Azul.

More strenuous option: *Laguna Diablo*

You pick up the trail at the Visitors' Centre and head north towards the Diablo Lagoon. Your walk takes you up alongside the Diablo river crossing the valley which is covered with native forest and gives way to beautiful views of the north face of the Fitz Roy massif. The trail has a gentle slope and crosses the river by hanging bridges.

After about two and a half hours, you will leave the shelter of the forest to enter the rocky area near the

lagoon, as you get closer and closer to the Cagliero glacier, encased between the hills that descends to the lagoon. The lagoon is of glacial origin, elongated and measures about 1800 meters long by 600 meters wide.

Less strenuous option: *Laguna Verde and Azul*

This trail also begins a few meters away from the Visitors' Centre, yet heads towards the forest of Lengas. After a few minutes walking, you will cross the bridge of Diablo River where the footpath begins to gain elevation. As you approach Laguna Azul, you will cross the bridge.

In about half an hour you will pass near a waterfall that comes from the Blue Lagoon, and finally another bridge will cross this small stream just before reaching the lagoon. The lagoon can be seen just in the last meters of the trail, a mirror of crystalline water hidden in the forest of Lengas and flanked to the west by the hill.

Walking north following along the bridge of the lagoon for another 500 meters, you access the small Laguna Verde from where you have a unique view of the north face of the Fitz Roy that stands from behind the Cerro Eléctrico.

Overnight at the Hotel Destino Sur (B+L+D)

Day 12

Today we begin the long journey back home. We board our early transfer to travel back across the windswept Patagonian steppe to the airport at El Calafate. We will bid a fond farewell to new friends and go our separate ways either back home or on to more adventure in South America. Don't forget to buy a jar of Calafate Berry jam to ensure that you will return to Patagonia one day! (B)

VISAS AND PASSPORTS

Visas and Entry Requirements

Visa requirements and costs can change suddenly. Please double check with embassy websites for the latest information.

- Citizens of Canada, UK, USA, Australia and most Western European countries need passports only. You do not need to get a tourist visa.

Passports

If you don't have a passport, apply for one now because the process can be lengthy. If you do have a passport, please check the expiry date. The expiry date is important because many countries, including Chile, won't let you enter unless your passport is valid for at least six months beyond the date you complete your trip.

FLIGHTS & AIRPORTS

You are responsible for booking all flights, international as well as domestic. However, if you need help, please feel free to call or email the Bio Bio office.

A travel agent we often use is: *G&G Travel and Tours* Gilda Gutierrez

gildagutierrez@comcast.net

866-498-0530 or 786-206-0710

Flying in: Punta Arenas Airport (PUQ) You will arrive PUQ typically through Santiago, Chile (SCL). Please arrive by day one of your trip.

Flying out: El Calafate airport, Argentina (FTE) Please book your flight for 12pm (noon) or later. You will fly into Buenos Aires, Argentina (EZE) El Calafate. You will possibly fly from El Calafate to the domestic Airport, "Aeroparque Jorge Newberry" (AEP). Please allow enough time between flights to switch airports if you arrive at AEP and depart for home from EZE.

Physical Preparations

A trek in Patagonia requires a lot more physical preparation than most vacations. You will be hiking on steep and rocky terrain for up to 8-10 hours a day. Although the hikes themselves may not always be particularly strenuous, their length and challenging terrain will be more taxing than expected.

Please keep in mind that the weather in Patagonia can change drastically and unexpectedly, causing the temperatures to drop. These weather conditions can easily affect both the body and morale. You need to be in excellent health and physical condition to enjoy such an experience as well as be mentally prepared for all weather conditions.

You should start your moderate training several months before departure, then slowly build up to a more strenuous level. Stop the strenuous activities if you feel dizzy, faint, have difficulty breathing, or experience any other significant medical discomfort.

We recommend striking a good balance between aerobic workouts and muscle strengthening. Outdoors, you can run, hike, or mountain bike on hilly terrain to best achieve the aerobic fitness component. Indoors at a gym, you can use the Stairmaster, treadmill and/or elliptical machine to substitute for the outdoor activities. Work on muscle strengthening, either by lifting weights or by doing push-ups, sit-ups, and squats. Include a long hike on the weekend (there's no better way to train for a trek than to trek!).

Remember - hiking in Southern Patagonia is no power walk on a treadmill. On your trek, you'll experience a variety of challenging terrain: you might cross over rocks, pebbles, sand, mud and climb up and down steep paths. Because of this, it's essential that you bring strong, good quality footwear that has been worn in (no brand new hiking boots!!).

EQUIPMENT INFORMATION

The personal equipment list we provide you with has been developed through years of practical experience. It is important that the clothing you bring will withstand the rigors of the trip. Your personal equipment should not weigh more than 40 pounds and all clothing should be quick drying and be made of synthetics. Warmth and comfort are the main objectives! Weather conditions can vary considerably in Patagonia. It's important to dress in layers so that you can maintain a comfortable body temperature no matter what Mother Nature may have in store. The inner layer should move perspiration outside, where it can evaporate. The intermediate layer should insulate while the outside layer should act as a barrier to wind and rain.

Weather & Climate

The vast unbroken stretch of ocean to the west and south of the South American continent leaves the Patagonian Andes very exposed to the saturated winds that circle the Antarctic landmass. Also, the influence from the strong marine currents and Southern Patagonian Ice Field make the weather hard to predict.

In Patagonia the weather can be very unpredictable, and can change drastically and unexpectedly. On a sunny day, daytime temperatures can be very pleasant, ranging between 13°C -20°C (low 60s and low 70s F). However, rain, high winds, and cold air can blow in quickly even during the summer months, making the temperatures drop into the -1°C/5°C (30s and 40s F). Snow is a possibility.

You need to be prepared for these changes at all times, as you will most likely experience the area's fickle moods. Rest assured, however, that just as quickly as the weather turns nasty, it can turn balmy, too! Nighttime temperatures will most likely be in the -1°C /5°C (30s and 40s F) depending on the weather.

Luggage, Clothing & Travel Accessories

Try to go as light as possible and take only the essentials. Excess baggage can be a burden to you and to our support personnel. Keep in mind that there are limits on how much your duffel bag/suitcase can weight because of weight restrictions on both international and domestic flights (usually 20 kg/44 lbs. for domestic flights).

Luggage

Daypack - should have a capacity of 20 to 30 liters (1220 to 1830 cubic inches). This daypack is only needed to carry your personal belongings for the day (camera, water, box lunch, sunscreen, extra layers, etc).

Rain Gear

Rain is a possibility so be sure to pack some rain gear—both tops and bottoms. A jacket is the most important item to keep your torso warm and dry. We also recommend rain pants. The jacket and pants should be compact enough to fit easily into your daypack.

Pile or Fleece

Fleece is warm, dries quickly and is not excessively bulky. It can be found in many different styles, colors and weights.

Hiking Clothes

Choose lightweight, synthetic fabrics that breathe well for any weather walking. Whatever you choose, be sure you have comfortable freedom of movement, especially for uphill and downhill walking.

Footwear for Hiking and Walking

This is a hiking tour. The importance of good footwear cannot be overstated. What may seem like a good shoe at home could leave you with sore feet on your trip. Given that the trails are often gravelly or sometimes muddy, you need a good walking boot with a firm sole, good ankle support and a degree of water resistance. It's now easy to find a "hybrid" walking boot, which combines the lightweight, ventilated features of a shoe with the support and durability of a boot. If you buy new walking shoes or boots for the trip, make sure you break them in well before you go.

Socks

Bring at least one pair for each day unless you want to wash them out each night. We recommend synthetic / wool blend as these tend to draw the perspiration from the foot and will keep your feet warm, even when wet. It may be a good idea to bring along some additional items such as foot powder, blister kit, cushioned pads and/or bandages to place inside your footwear-just in case. Another worthwhile product is something called Spenco 2nd Skin®, which provides cushioned comfort with an antiseptic for blistered and sore feet. Many people find a product called moleskin gives them great relief from blisters. The guides carry a blister kit as part of their first-aid supplies.

Sun Protection

Since you will be spending a good portion of your day outside, we recommend you bring skin protection cream with an appropriate SPF. Sun visors or baseball caps can also be helpful.

Photo & Video Gear

Although Patagonia offers unmatched photo opportunities, the weather changes very quickly and the sky is often overcast. The light quality and conditions constantly change.

Bringing the right camera will determine the quality of your photographs of the trip. A good DSLR camera with telephoto lens is ideal. Lenses longer than 300mm will require a tripod for good results and may be too cumbersome to lug around. Many people are able to get great photographs with their smartphones only!

There is electricity at the main dome at Ecocamp. There you will be able to charge your phone and camera batteries (220 v).

CHECKLIST

Clothing

We have not included quantities for each item listed. Use your own judgment, based on the length of your trip and overall packing/weight restrictions for your luggage.

Underwear

- Regular underwear. Synthetics are easier to wash and dry
- Synthetic thermal underwear. You need a lightweight long underwear top and bottom of a polyester-type fabric. Wool and wool/synthetic blends are also suitable

Shirts

- Long-sleeved, synthetic or wool shirt
- Short-sleeved synthetic or cotton/synthetic T-shirts

Sweater/Jacket

- Medium-weight sweater or jacket of synthetic fabric, such as fleece
- Medium-weight down or synthetic-fill jacket (10-12 oz. of down or 15-20 oz. of fiberfill)

Trousers

- Full-length pants, preferably of quick-drying synthetic fabric
- Hiking shorts, preferably of quick-drying synthetic fabric (pants and shorts may be combined in 'convertible' pants)
- Pile/fleece pants, ideal for around camp

Headwear

- Sun hat with wide brim, preferably with a chinstrap to keep it from blowing off
- Bandanna/Buff. It will keep your neck from getting sunburned and can double as a hand towel
- Wool or pile hat, or ski cap

Foul Weather Gear

- Gore-Tex rain/wind parka (must fit over bulky clothing)

- (optional) Sturdy poncho to protect daypack and camera gear from rain, and/or pack cover
- Gore-Tex rain/wind pants, preferably with full-length side zipper (must fit over your other pants)

Hands

- Gloves or mitts (wool or pile)
- Waterproofed shell gloves or mitts ('handy' if you have rainy days!)

Socks

- Medium weight synthetic or wool socks (eg: smartwool)
- Athletic socks (synthetic for easy washing and drying) that are suitable for the shoes you'll be wearing while in towns
- Inner socks (synthetic) that can be washed and dried quickly (optional, depending on your current trekking footwear setup)

Footwear

This is where the rubber meets the road - take care in your choice. Sturdy, properly fitting footwear can make your trip much more pleasurable. If you're buying new boots for this trip, please break them in advance by wearing them as often as possible before the trip.

- Medium-weight, sturdy hiking boots with padded ankle, good arch support, and a lug sole for traction. Your hiking boots should be waterproofed, well broken in, and suitable for prolonged walking on rocky terrain and possibly snow. Running shoes or light day hiking shoes are not recommended for this trip.
- Tennis shoes or Teva-type sandals to wear at the domes (optional). Sandals are also suggested.
- Comfortable walking shoes to wear while in towns.

Other Items

- Swimsuit (you never know...)
- One set of casual city clothes that are dressier than your trek clothes (for when in towns)
- Hiking sticks (optional but highly recommended for active excursions). These are helpful, if not essential, to relieve the impact on your knees during long downhills. Some people use them on uphill as well; however, it is not recommended to make an habitual use out of them (it could compromise the natural balance of your legs and ankles). We recommend to practice with one, or two, before the hike. This is only a recommendation and not for everybody.

Travel Accessories

- Wide mouth water bottles, 1-liter capacity. Bring two and make sure they are leak-proof, heavy-duty plastic (Nalgene brand) or metal (Klean Kanteen). Many day packs have capacity to carry Camelback/Platypus water bladders. This is a great option – just make sure they don't leak. Lightweight plastic bottles, such as Evian-type bottles and the kind used by bicyclists, aren't recommended—they leak and break.
- Toiletry kit—soap, toothbrush, and so on (biodegradable bath products will be supplied for use at EcoCamp)
- Moisturizing lotion. The air in Patagonia is very dry.
- Insect repellent
- Ace bandage or brace if you're prone to sore knees or ankles
- Sunglasses (very important!)
- Spare pair of prescription glasses, prescription sunglasses, or contact lenses. (Attention contact lens wearers: parts of Patagonia are very dusty—plan to wear glasses some of the time.)
- Sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher. The sun in Patagonia is very intense.
- Sunscreen chapstick/lip balm of SPF 15 or higher

- Small flashlight or headlamp with spare batteries
- Heavyweight plastic garbage bag to use as a waterproofing liner inside your daypack
- Personal first aid kit with any prescription medications and back-ups

Optional Travel Accessories

- Camera and charger - plenty of memory!
- Binoculars
- Watch
- Repair kit with needle, thread, and safety pins
- Reading and writing material
- Spanish/English dictionary
- Your favorite snack food. We'll have plenty of excellent food, but you might want to bring along your favorite hiking energy/protein bars. Although we accommodate vegetarians, and we'll be served fresh fruits and vegetables, meat is one of Chile's and Argentina's main staples. Vegetarians might want to bring some protein supplements.

* When you travel, always bring irreplaceable items in your carry-on such as: cameras, medications, spare eyeglasses and important papers.

MONEY MATTERS

We recommend using a combination of your credit card, getting local currency using an ATM machine and having US dollars in several denominations for tips. In Chile the unit of currency is the Chilean "peso" and in Argentina the currency is the Argentinean "peso".

For current exchange rates check the following website: <http://www.xe.com/>.

US dollars are widely accepted in hotels, restaurants, and shops. However, you will need local currency out of the cities; just enough for drinks, souvenirs, and incidental items. You will find exchange agencies at the airports, hotels, commercial area of cities and banks. Banks are open 9:00am to 2:00pm, Monday through Friday, but most banks do not change money!

ATMs

Plus, Cirrus and other networks connecting ATMs are available in Chile and Argentina. If your credit card has been programmed with a PIN, it's likely you can use that at ATMs to withdraw money as a cash advance. **Always ask your bank before you leave home about the number of withdrawals you may make abroad, the limit each day, and also let them know where you are going so they do not put a hold on your card.** You may be charged a foreign transaction fee for each transaction.

Credit Cards

Most of the bigger restaurants and shops accept credit cards. If you have American Express, Visa or Master Card, you're probably equipped for any establishment that takes cards. If you only have one credit card, VISA is the most widely accepted. A shopkeeper may require you to pay the credit card fee for purchases, so for the most ease, we recommend you use cash whenever possible.

Personal Checks

Personal checks are not accepted in shops or at your hotels.

Travelers Cheques

Traveler's checks have very limited use in smaller towns. If you plan to extend your vacation and visit some of the bigger cities like Santiago or Buenos Aires, you may also consider bringing traveler's cheques. In general, however, they are no longer as useful as they used to be.

Tipping

Tipping is, of course, entirely voluntary and how much you give depends on how you feel about the service received. There are many people that help make these trips run smoothly and tips are always most appreciated. This is a rough guideline to try and help with how much to tip and to whom. It is best to keep many small bills (either dollars or pesos) so you can tip hotel staff, drivers, coffee shops, etc. on your own. Typically, you should designate 10-15% of the land cost of the trip for all tips. For example, a \$4000 trip would mean approximately \$400 in tips. Tips are best paid in US cash or local currency.

- Hotel staff - porters usually receive \$1 per bag as do taxi drivers. Bus drivers - \$2 per person
- The Eco-Camp has a "tip box" for the restaurant and hotel staff - we recommend \$5-15/day
- EcoCamp: \$30/day to be given to the head guide, if more than 1 guide is with your group
- Argentina trekking: \$30/day to be given to the head guide, if more than 1 guide is with your group
- Argentina glacier: \$30/person
- Trip leader: remainder at your discretion
- Restaurants - 10% is the norm (however, when lunch/dinner is included in the itinerary, tips and non-alcoholic drinks will be paid by the Trip Leader.) If you choose to drink beer, wine or cocktails you will be asked to chip in for those drinks.

Spending money

You won't need to take a great deal of money on the trip. You will need to have money available for the following:

- Gifts and souvenirs
- Tipping money
- A few meals that may not be covered in the trip
- Drinks (wine/beer at dinner)

TRAVEL PRACTICALITIES

Trip Insurance

Bio Bio Expeditions recommends that you purchase a travel protection plan to help protect you and your travel investment against the unexpected. For your convenience, we offer travel protection through Travelex Insurance Services. For more information on the available plans or to enroll, contact Travelex Insurance Services at 800-228-9792 and reference location number 05-8655. Travelex Insurance Services, Inc CA Agency License #0D10209. Travel Insurance is underwritten by, Berkshire Hathaway Specialty Insurance Company, NAIC #22276. 55Y.

Immunizations

Although there are no immunizations required to travel to Chile and Argentina, it is recommended that **typhoid** and **diphtheria-tetanus** be current. **Hepatitis A** is also recommended. The cholera vaccination is no longer officially required and cholera can be avoided by practicing strict food and water precautions. We advise that you consult your physician regarding recommended immunizations and other health precautions. Bio Bio Expeditions does not take responsibility for which medications or inoculations you and your physician deem necessary for your safe participation on the expedition.

For further information, call the CDC's International Traveler's Hotline:

Phone: 1-888-232-4636

Online: www.cdc.gov

Weather

The Patagonia summer generally offers warm, sunny days and cool nights, although rainy and cold weather is always a possibility. Patagonia days are long (18 hours) and depending on the time of year, the sun rises at about 6:00 a.m. and sets near 10:00 p.m (22:00).

The weather in the Torres del Paine and Chalten areas can be very unpredictable. Wind is always prevalent and rain, sleet and snow are always a possibility. Please make sure you come prepared for whatever Mother Nature may have in store.

Water

You will find some of the purest water on earth flowing freely in Patagonia. While some people feel comfortable drinking the tap water in Patagonia, it is best to be cautious and drink bottled water. Bottled water is popular and can be ordered at all restaurants. Ask for “agua mineral, sin gas” (non-carbonated) or “con gas” (carbonated). Some eco-minded travelers bring a small water filter and filter tap water or creek water right into their water bottles. Steri-pens are also an easy way to purify water.

Food

You will discover some of the best produce and cuisine found anywhere on the planet! And if you are a meat eater, you will be in heaven! The Argentine steaks are world famous and the Chilean seafood un-paralleled for its exotic variety of fish, shellfish and crustaceans. The wines are amazing, as are the fresh juices commonly served.

Gelato ice cream is found everywhere and is well worth at least one visit to a “heladeria”! Chile and Argentina also have abundant coffee shops where you can enjoy a delicious ‘café con leche’, home-made pastries or alfajors – this is a popular afternoon activity for locals.

Digestive Worries

Traveling to Argentina and Chile is not like traveling in central America or even other parts of South America where water borne diseases are more common. You will feel that that the Argentinos and Chileans are very mindful of cleanliness and hygiene. Despite the many precautions we all take to stay healthy, occasionally one may experience diarrhea. The major problem associated with diarrhea is fluid loss leading to severe dehydration, so it is important to maintain plentiful fluid intake. Avoid milk, caffeine, and alcohol, as it will only further dehydrate you. The best drinks are weak tea, mineral water, and caffeine-free soft drinks. Ideally it is best to let diarrhea run its course. However, you may want to bring over-the-counter diarrhea medication to minimize your potential discomfort.

Prescriptions

If you currently take prescription medications, be sure to have a plentiful supply and also the doctor’s written prescription in case you need a refill. It is best to carry medications in your carry-on bag in case of lost luggage. Also, if you wear prescription glasses or contacts, we advise that you bring along a spare set.

Voltage

Electric voltage is 220 volts, 50 cycles (220v, 50Hz). The use of appliances or electric devices designed for 110 volts need the use of a converter. Most travel appliances, like laptops, have an auto-volt (110v – 240v) transformer built in that will adapt to Chilean/Argentinean electricity. At many airports universal adaptor kits are available and handy if you plan to recharge cameras and other devices. There are many new products that have most plugs/adaptors all-in-one, complete with USB plugs as well!

Safety

Although the Argentinesans/ Chileans are a warm, friendly, fun-loving people, thievery can be a problem, mostly in the bigger cities. Always keep your wits about you and be aware of your surroundings. When you're with other people, watch out for each other. Large crowds are prime locations for pick-pocketing to occur. Keep your money and important documents in a money belt or hidden pouch around your waist, neck or under your shirt. When purchasing items, do not pull out lots of money. We advise that you leave all valuable jewelry, including watches, at home. Thieves often work in pairs or groups - one tries to distract you (e.g.: by squirting food or paint on your clothing) and in the ensuing confusion, another one makes off with your belongings.

Jet Lag Precautions

When you cross several time zones to reach your destination, you often lose many hours of regular sleep. On arrival, your body then must suddenly adjust to new sleeping and eating patterns. The result is jet lag. Its symptoms are fatigue – often compounded by insomnia and restlessness – irritability, and vague disorientation. Chile and Argentina are roughly in the same time zone as the East Coast of the United States, however, they practice daylight savings as well so there may be a couple hours difference. Coming from the USA jet lag is not as much of a problem as it is traveling to Europe or Africa.

You cannot totally avoid jet lag, but you can minimize it. Here's how:

- Start your trip well rested. Try to begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave.
- Switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane. Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Try to sleep on overnight flights.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before and during your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and or fruit juice while flying. You should buy a large bottle of water at a kiosk, or fill up your water bottle from the tap, right before boarding – once you have cleared security and are "inside".
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap, unless you didn't sleep at all on the plane.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Environmental Responsibility

We pride ourselves on being an environmentally responsible company. We request that on trek you carry out whatever you carry in, including non-biodegradable items such as batteries, empty plastic containers, and so on.

The areas of Chile where we trek do not have the proper facilities to process this kind of waste and your throwaways will end up in the river or tossed down a hillside. We suggest that you carry a large zip-lock bag in your pocket while you're on the trail for daily accumulations. Recycling is not common outside of big cities. Considering the problem with plastic water bottles, we encourage you to bring a re-usable water bottle that you can fill from hotel taps.

COUNTRY INFORMATION

Language

The official language in both Chile and Argentina is Spanish. The Spanish spoken in South America is similar to the Castilian Spanish of Madrid, albeit with drastically different pronunciation and many vocabulary changes. The good news is that in most places, like restaurants and hotels, you might find someone who speaks English - and, of course, all our representatives and most guides speak both English and Spanish. If you do speak some Spanish you will have fun practicing with the locals!

Argentina Overview

If any country deserves the label 'land of extremes' then Argentina does. This vast country occupying a large chunk of southern South America is topographically diverse and infinitely enchanting. From the snow-capped peaks and glaciers of the Andes to the dusty plains of Patagonia, Argentina never fails to amaze. Whether exploring the lush rainforest of Misiones, horse riding in the scorched red mountains of Salta, trekking the turquoise lakes and evergreen forests of the Lake District or playing the *gaucho* in the fertile Pampas, the country's variety makes it a delightful place to visit.

At the heart of all this is the capital city Buenos Aires. Often described as the Paris of South America, Buenos Aires is a smart, contemporary, chic city that is full of life and bursting with energy, but still with an earthy Latin American flair. While the spirit of the tango is alive and well and the *gaucho* heritage is celebrated, modern Argentina is more cosmopolitan in its outlook than many South American countries.

The people of Argentina are warm, friendly, passionate and open to visitors. Despite a dark period of military dictatorship and a series of economic crises, the Argentines have a tenacious spirit and lust for life that is infectious. This passion shines through in the nation's great loves of football, food and partying. There is never a dull moment in Argentina and visitors are beginning to discover the opportunities. The tourism industry is booming and deservedly so: the country begs to be explored and experienced.

Geography

Argentina is situated in South America, east of the Andes, and is bordered by Chile to the west, the Atlantic Ocean to the east and Uruguay, Bolivia, Paraguay and Brazil to the north and northeast. There are four main geographical areas: the Andes, the North and Mesopotamia, the Pampas and Patagonia. The climate and geography of Argentina vary considerably, ranging from the great heat of the Chaco (*El Chaco*), through the pleasant climate of the central Pampas to the sub-Antarctic cold of the Patagonian Sea. Mount Aconcagua soars almost 7,000m (23,000ft) and waterfalls at Iguazú stretch around a massive semi-circle, thundering 70m (230ft) to the bed of the Paraná River. In the southwest is the Argentine Lake District with a string of beautiful glacial lakes framed by mountains.

Argentina Fast Facts

Area: 2,780,400 sq km (1,073,518 sq miles)

Population: 43,847,430 (estimate 2016)

Population Density: 14.4 per sq km.

Capital: Buenos Aires. Population: 2.89 million

Government: Federal and Democratic Republic. Gained independence from Spain in 1816.

Religion: More than 90% Roman Catholic, 2% Protestant with small Muslim and Jewish communities.

Chile Overview

Chile is situated in South America, bounded by Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, the Antarctic and the Pacific Ocean. Home of the Andes mountain range, it is a thin ribbon of land, 4,200km (2,610 miles) long and nowhere more than 180km (115 miles) wide.

The Araucanian Indians were the original inhabitants of Chile. The Spanish conquered the country in the 16th century and ruled until the country's independence in 1818. As a result of the War of the Pacific (1879-1883), Chile gained Tarapacá, Tacna and Arica from Bolivia, and took control of the Atacama Desert in the north. Border disputes between Chile and Bolivia have been a recurrent element in Chile's history ever since.

Elections in 1970 brought Unidad Popular, led by the Marxist Dr. Salvador Allende, to power. A military coup followed, during which Allende committed suicide rather than surrender to his attackers. General Augusto

Pinochet Ugarte was declared Supreme Chief of State and president, and remained in power despite considerable opposition from many sectors of society. The ruling military junta assumed wide-ranging powers, its main aim being to eliminate the Communist Party and other leftist opposition. During the 'state of siege', political opponents were imprisoned (and many of them 'disappeared'), censorship was systematic and all non-government political activity banned.

These powers were gradually relaxed during the 1980s. Patricio Aylwin, leader of the Concertación de los Partidos de la Democracia (CPD), stood against the General and won in the presidential elections of December 1989. In 1998, Pinochet officially retired and Chile has begun to come to terms with his legacy. In the 90's Chile became a popular tourist destination as this violent past came to an end. Since then Chile has had a succession of democratically elected presidents and has experienced economic growth and stability. The Chilean people are warm and friendly and enjoy visitors. They are very proud of their beautiful country, the birthplace of celebrated poet Pablo Neruda.

Because of its unusual geography, Chile has a hugely varied climate ranging from the world's driest desert in the north, through a Mediterranean climate in the center, to a snow-prone Alpine climate in the south. Travelers will enjoy the country's abundant fauna and flora and spectacular scenery consisting of huge glaciers, fjords, waterfalls, blue lakes and numerous national parks where trekking is a very popular activity amongst tourists.

Geography

Chile is situated in South America, bordered to the north by Peru, to the east by Bolivia and Argentina, to the west by the Pacific and to the south by the Antarctic. The country exercises sovereignty over a number of islands off the coast, including the Juan Fernández Islands (of Robinson Crusoe fame) and Easter Island. Chile is one of the most remarkably shaped countries in the world; a ribbon of land, 4,200km (2,610 miles) long and nowhere more than 180km (115 miles) wide.

The Andes and a coastal highland range take up one-third or half of the width in parts, and run parallel with each other from north to south. The coastal range forms high, sloped cliffs into the sea from the northern to the central area. Between the ranges runs a fertile valley, except in the north where transverse ranges join the two major ones, and in the far south where the sea has broken through the coastal range to form an assortment of archipelagos and channels.

The country contains wide variations of soil and vast differences of climate. This is reflected in the distribution of the population, and in the wide range of occupations from area to area. The northern part of the country consists mainly of the Atacama Desert, the driest in the world. It is also the main mining area. The central zone is predominantly agricultural. The south is forested and contains some agriculture; further south, the forests on the Atlantic side give way to rolling grassland on which sheep and cattle are raised.

Chile Fast Facts

Area: 756,096 sq km (291,930 sq miles)

Population: 17,574,003

Population Density: 24 per sq km.

Capital: Santiago (de Chile). Population: 5.6 million

Government: Republic. Gained independence from Spain in 1810

Religion: Christian, of which the majority are Roman Catholic

RECOMMENDED READING

You'll enjoy your trip much more if you are well-informed about the places you'll be visiting and the sights and wildlife you'll see. The following books are helpful for getting more information about Patagonia:

- [The Tower: A Chronicle of Climbing and Controversy on Cerro Torre](#) by Kelly Cordes

Trip is arranged, guided, and/or outfitted, or subcontracted, by Bio Bio Expeditions.
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- [The Cloud Forest — A Chronicle to the South American Wilderness](#) by Peter Matthiessen
- Any book of poetry by Chile's Pablo Neruda, such as [20 Poems of Love](#) and [One song of Despair](#); or any by Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral. Any short stories by Argentine Jorge Luis Borges.
- Any book by Isabel Allende, especially [The House of Spirits](#).
- [In Patagonia](#) by Bruce Chatwin
- [Travels in a Thin Country](#) by Sarah Wheeler
- [Voyage of the Beagle](#) by Charles Darwin

TRAVEL RESOURCES

Money

www.xe.net/ucc— Universal currency converter site.

www.oanda.com/currency/converter — Exchange rates and currency forecasts.

www.visa.com/atmlocator — List of ATM machines, worldwide.

Clothing/Gear

www.patagonia.com — Expedition clothing.

www.rei.com — Expedition gear and clothing.

www.mountainhardwear.com — Tents, sleeping bags, and expedition clothing.

www.exofficio.com — Lightweight travel clothes.

www.eaglecreek.com — Excellent travel gear and packing tips.

www.cameraworld.com — The best prices and camera and video gear.

www.llbean.com — Outdoor gear and clothing.

Health

wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel — Center for Disease Control

Passport and Embassy Information

travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/passports.html — Get a passport & Embassy listings

www.zvs.com — Zierer Visa service for expedited passports and visas.

Weather

www.weather.com — Find out the weather anywhere in the world.

Travel Warnings

travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html — State department warnings for overseas travelers.

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