



**Argentinian
Explorer**

EL CALAFATE FULL

Perito Moreno Glacier + Argentino Lake + Cerro Frías + El Chalten

An itinerary in El Calafate where nothing is left to improvisation. We will visit the Perito Moreno Glacier with the option to do a mini-trekking, we sail along the Argentino Lake, we know a Patagonian Estancia, we trek on the Cerro Frías and escape to El Chaltén, trekking capital in Patagonia.



8 days - 7 nights

- ✓ Accommodation and breakfast - Double Room
- ✓ Transfer IN OUT APT/HTL/APT
- ✓ Regular Tours with Spanish & English Guide
- ✓ Permanent Coordination
- ✓ Food and Air tickets not included
- ✓ Tickets to National Parks included
- ✓ Spanish & English Bilingual Guide

Itinerary



El Calafate

Reception and transfer from Calafate Airport to the hotel.



Visit to the Perito Moreno Glacier

Early in the morning we make our way to the most famous glacier in the world. It was declared as a Heritage Humanity in 1981 by UNESCO and it is considered unique for many characteristics such as its continuous advance, its comfortable access to its best viewpoints and the possibility to walk over it. The name was given in honour of the great explorer of the Patagonian area, Perito Francisco Moreno. We walk along the edge of the southern side of the Argentino Lake, before crossing the rivers Centinela and Mitre, at the same time we discover post card views of the pre Andean Mountain Chain.

We arrive to Brazo Rico and enter Los Glaciares National Park. While we tour along the Rich Lake we see the huge blocks of ice drifting along and walk until we have a full panoramic view of this giant glacier. If the weather conditions are favourable, we can have the privilege of attending this unique spectacle in the argentinean Patagonia... the ice landslides from the southern falls in which huge ice floes cover the homonym

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channel as they are accumulated there or in the Brazo Rico. Here it is possible to get to know the glacier from different panoramic and viewpoints by walking the footbridges whilst we are informed about its history, characteristics and settings. In the afternoon we return to the Hotel.

Note: The Perito Moreno is a glacier in continuous advance; this is different to the great majority of such giant glaciers that are in a severe regression. In its advance it surrounds the cold waters of the Brazo Rico, that are originated from the Argentino Lake which causes some pressure over the ice that make the level of water increase in that part of the lake and has the effect of generating a tunnel of almost 45 metres through which flows from the Brazo Rico and in to the Argentino Lake. The continuous erosion by these waters causes parts of the dome to collapse producing fantastic spectacles.

Optional: Mini trekking to the Perito Moreno Glacier

To undertake this brief hike we need to cross the Rich Lake and then we arrive to the south east coast after a few minutes of navigation, which is in front of the southern wall of the glacier. Here we disembark and we go to the refuge where we are organized in groups. We begin our short 15 minutes walk going around the lake until we arrive to the glacier. Here we prepare our specialized equipment for trekking on ice. We suggest using hiking boots with thick socks, preferably woolen (it is not possible to use rubber boots because they are too slippery).

The track takes less than two hours to walk at a normal rhythm and we can discover a great variety of types and sizes of crevices, sump holes, small lagoons, and 'seracs' that are great blocks of ice divided by fissures caused by internal movements. We learn about the local flora and wildlife of the place and some other features of the glaciers: for example the continuous and incredible advance of the glacier leaving behind giant pieces of ice. We start our return through an Andean Magellan Forest covered in plants and typical trees of the southern Patagonia.

Note: This tour is available nearly all year round except for June and July. The people suitable for this expedition are those between 10 and 65 years old approximately. It all depends upon the physical condition of the person. It is forbidden for pregnant women, people with illnesses related to heart, movement or coordination. We do not recommend this tour for overweight people. Smoking is not allowed throughout the programme.



Navigation across the Argentino Lake

Today a navigation between giant ice structures in Los Glaciares National Park is waiting for us. We firstly travel to Punta Bandera (Flag point) in order to make an early embarkation to start our trip on the Argentino Lake, the biggest and most southern of all the Patagonian lakes in the Argentinean region. It covers an area of 1466 kms² and has a depth ranging from 150 to 500 metres.

We begin our navigation by the north branch of the lake, visiting the Spegazzini, Onelli, Bolado and Agassiz Glaciers, these last ones located in the Onelli Bay, moreover we get closer to the Upsala Glacier. This glacier integrates an area surrounded by other glaciers which covers 850 km² and its walls reach until 80 metres high. Its name comes from the University of the same name in Sweden that was the first one in starting a study about the surrounded area, in the twentieth century. On the other hand, the Spegazzini Glacier is the highest inside the national park at 135 metres and is located on the homonym branch of the Argentino Lake.

We disembark in the Onelli Bay, only if the ice conditions allow us because the large icebergs can block the entrance to the boat and it is always risky for the crew. Onelli leaves us amazed with the presence of an ancient Patagonian forest populated with different species of trees such as ñires, canelos and lengas. We might be lucky if we watch the giant condors that inhabit the Andean Mountain Chain. Meanwhile, we make a walk to a unique place where the confluence of the Agassiz, Bolados and Heim Glaciers into the Onelli Lagoon takes place. In our return we see the front of the Spegazzini Glacier.



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Please note

There could be ice falls from the Upsala Glacier that leave giant icebergs which could block the navigation to the Onelli Bay. This natural hazard could make difficult the landing. When this happens the boat crosses the waters of the Ice floe Channel to go on the northern position of the Perito Moreno Glacier.



A day in a Patagonian Estancia (The shed of the Alice Glacier)

Today we visit a typical Patagonian Estancia in order to get to know the activities they have, and be in touch with the rural folk. We take the route in direction to Punta Bandera to travel 20 kms of steppe land. We are received in an old shed with cakes, homemade bread and doughs together with a tea, a mate (this is the gaucho local drink made with dry leaves of the yerba mate wetted by hot water that does not reach the boiling point), chocolate or coffee. After the welcome we go to the main old quarter of the Estancia to be informed about its history and the local activities such as the sheep herding by dogs and horses or sheeps' shearing.

We can also have the opportunity to start a walk or horse ride to Laguna de los Pájaros Natural Reserve to see different species of birds. At lunch time we look forward to an exquisite traditional Patagonian lamb barbecue. The Estancia offers a panoramic view of the Argentino Lake, the Crystal Mountain and the Andes Mountain chain. If we manage to get to the summit of the Frías Mountain it is possible to see the rough profusion of the landscape and discover the deafening Patagonian wind on the summit and its rocky grounds.



La Leona Petrified Forest

We leave in the morning in order to spend the whole day in the steppes of Patagonia discovering new places and enjoying the free air and adventure. We take the Route 5 to the east and then join the mythical Route 40 along which we have magnificent views of the Argentino Lake, the Santa Cruz River, La Leona and its attractive valley, and having as a back drop the Mountain Range of the Andes and the Fitz Roy Mountain. We stop for a few minutes in the La Leona Hotel, considered an historic site, and then go west, guided by the edge of the Viedma Lake until we get to the slopes of the Los Hornos Mountain.

Close to midday we arrive to the foot of the Los Hornos Mountain where the Route finishes. Here we find a great depression in the land and that is where we can see the petrified tree trunks and begin our trek to explore them. We take some time to have lunch and during this time we can see many petrified tree trunks, some of them up to 1.20 in diameter, that reveal how different the climatic conditions were for millions of years that supported a flora so abundant and great. Here it is possible to also discover some fossil remains of the dinosaurs. This steppe zone has a very dry climate and generally is very warm. After walking the area we make our return to the hotel.

Note: this program is available from October only when the meteorological conditions permit. The walk is of moderate difficulty and for this a good physical condition is required. Children less than 6 years old cannot undertake this activity.

Winter experience - Optional

During the winter we can take advantage of the snow to experience the white landscapes. We climb the slope until the Balcón (Balcony) del Calafate. From this point we use some vehicles that are fitted with caterpillar traction such as the Land Rover Defender in order to travel over the snow up to an altitude of 1,000 metres. We continue with these until we arrive at the Laberinto de Piedras (Stone Labyrinth), an ideal place to enjoy activities such as dog pulled sleighing, snow bicycles, snow shoes and a sliding banana amongst other games that are available for us to try, and fully enjoy the snow. Later, we are treated to some exquisite steaks or a snack with hot chocolate. In the afternoon we return to the hotel.

Note: *the outdoor lunch including soup, steaks a la plancha, vegetables, bread and drink or snack is included in the itinerary. This program is only available during the winter months of June, July and August.*



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Frias Mountain

From the way to the Perito Moreno Glacier we get to know the Cerro Frias(Frias Mountain) and its environment on the Patagonian Steppes. It is attractive because it is in the middle of the steppe and is not connected to any mountain range and therefore permits some impressive panoramic views of the Torres del Paine, the Fitz Roy Mountain, the cordon of the Crystals, Brazo Rico, Brazo Norte, Lago Argentino, the Magellan Peninsular, amongst other grand attractions that mix the colours of the forests of lengas y ñires, the lakes, the flora and its fauna. Here we have a beef steak barbecue accompanied by vegetables cooked in a mud oven, together with local bread.

Option: trekking with ropes or a 4x4

We make a trek by a well marked trail, through a forest of lengas and ñires and crossing rivers, guided by a map that shows the heights, viewpoints, rest areas and observation points for the flora and native animals and the panoramic landscapes of the Torres del Paine, Fitz Roy and the Lago Argentino amongst others. We take the time to have lunch and afterwards to continue our way until the summit of the Cerro Frias to obtain the most incredible postcard views. We combine the trekking with a traverse of a rope bridge, shifting between two cables that are joined at fixed points but with a certain height difference so that we can slide by gravity. We walk until the initial point at an altitude of 562 metres on the southern slopes of the Cerro Frías.

The trip is fantastic with the views of the Torres del Paine, Centinela Valley, Lago Roca (Red Lake), etc. Once we make the crossing of nearly 470 metres hanging by the cable we arrive at the point of the trail that takes us back to the Estancia. Another option is to travel over the zone in a 4x4. On the journey we cross over a swamp and climb by the lowest part of the Cerro Frías. Following on we have a tremendous view of the environment. We go close to fields where there are cows, guanacos, maras (Patagonian hares) and horses. It takes close to two hours to reach the summit with its magnificent panoramic views and later we make our return to the Estancia for lunch.

Notes for your consideration: This adventure program is recommended for people between the ages of 10 and 60 and we do not advise for those that are overweight (more than 110 kgs) or expectant ladies or those with heart problems. You need to take hiking boots and suitable clothes for the activity.

day
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A day in the National Glacier Park: El Chaltén

We start this excursion from El Calafate taking the Route Number 40 bordering the Argentino Lake and giving us beautiful views on the way. We cross the Santa Cruz River and are reminded of the histories of Darwin and Fitz Roy who navigated the same. We continue until the La Leona River following its river bed to a hotel on the La Leona Pass where we have breakfast with homemade cakes.

We then retake the road to continue to the Viedma Lake where we have the view of the imposing Andes Mountain range until we reach El Chaltén, a small mountain town but with great attractions to offer, and this is why it is known as the Trekking Capital. Here we make a stop to appreciate the panoramic views up to the mountain range and the Viedma Glacier. We also visit the Interpretation Centre of the National Glacier Park.

Once in El Chaltén, we have various options to appreciate the day and see its landscapes. One of these is to continue until the Salto de Chorillo where we can take a short hike with a professional guide until the trails that lead to the great landmarks such as the Fitz Roy Mountain. On these trails we are taken to the most spectacular viewpoints of the named Mountain or the Torre Mountain where there are postcard views of the Capri lagoon and the Torre viewpoint. In the late afternoon we return to the hotel in El Calafate.

Note: This program is offered only Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays and therefore, depending on the day, we rearrange the elected itinerary.



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Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer to Calafate Airport.

END OF THE SERVICES
