



Expedition

PATAGONIA: ICECAP TRAIL



This information should answer some of your questions about the trip and give you a better idea of what we do day-to-day. It doesn't hope to answer everything. If you have any questions please get in touch.



On the Patagonian Icecap

- **Stand close to the icons of Patagonian climbing, Cerro Fitzroy and Cerro Torre**
- **Feel part of the uncertainties of a real expedition**
- **Tests and challenges on the Patagonian ice-cap**
- **Enjoy life beyond the tourist zone**
- **The best mountain company in Patagonia in conjunction with 'High Places'**

Patagonia

Southern Patagonia is still for many, the 'uttermost part of the earth.' It can be desolate and hard but also mystical and dramatic. Travel in Patagonia is arduous, but always exhilarating. Much of the southern tip of South America comprises flat and windswept 'pampas' as far as the eye can see - but in the far distance appear high and wild peaks with granite towers rearing up almost perpendicular. Hidden beneath the mountains are great lakes, many with enormous glaciers flowing into them and calving icebergs into these inland 'seas'. Behind the peaks and stretching westward to the endless fiorded Chilean coastline lies the Patagonian Ice Cap, the greatest ice field outside the Poles. Although it consists of the southern parts of both Chile and Argentina it is sometimes easier to consider Patagonia as a wilderness landscape and peoples that transcends national boundaries - a separate country altogether.

The trip

This is an uncompromising 'southern summer' expedition that offers progressive journeys towards and onto the Patagonian ice cap in Las Glacières National Park. For 2007 we have added a new warm up trek which has been walked, tested and refined during the past year. It links the great lakes of Argentino and Viedma to arrive at the Fitzroy area by foot (or boat actually) rather than the tourist bus. It will be an excellent training outing to review fitness and gear before the icecap traverse.

The main expedition accesses the ice field up the Marconi Glacier to make a committing high-level circuit along the rim of the Patagonian ice cap and under the legendary Cerro Torre. Depending on the state of the glaciers, crampons and possibly snowshoes (both are provided) will be used. It does not matter if you have used neither before.

The most important requirements for this trip are mountain fitness, good gear and experience of mountain rain, wind and snow. You will need to carry all personal gear and a share of group equipment and food although the Guides and support team will carry the biggest loads. Economy with personal gear will be necessary to keep loads manageable, especially on the icecap where you will need to carry around 20kgs. The weather will be a dominant factor.

This ambitious trip is the brainchild of our Fitzroy team of mountaineers with whom we have worked closely for over a decade. GPS navigation and radios will complement the safety equipment. In between and after the trips we can relax in warm and friendly accommodation in the local township of El Chalten.

Accommodation

In El Chalten we stay in a comfortable lodge with rooms shared by up to three people and communal facilities. On camp we use modern lightweight tents with two people sharing.

Transport

We use our own minibus with the luggage going on the roof. Driving, unusual for Patagonia, is minimal and apart from short local drop-offs, there is just one transfer at the end of the trip from El Chalten to El Calafate, a journey of approximately 4 hours.

Food

In El Calafate, (and Buenos Aires, flight inclusive group only) we provide bed and breakfast only. This allows you the option of trying the local foods and restaurants, very much part of the adventure. Our guides will advise on eating in towns and may know the places of character where there are few tourists. Often the group decides to eat together. A good three course dinner may cost around US\$25 approx. and lunch, US\$12 approx. On expedition each tent group will be responsible for cooking their own meals. The food on the expeditions will be varied, appetising and in good quantity.

Health and hygiene

Stomach illnesses have been happily absent on our trips here. The rivers are clean and unless advised by the local leader/guide there is no need to treat the water.

Climate

They say that if you stand still in Patagonia *"all four seasons will blow past you in a day - sometimes in an hour."* Literally expect anything! It can be very hot and the sun really burns here, but equally we are likely to experience rain with snow on both the ice cap and the Paine Circuit and

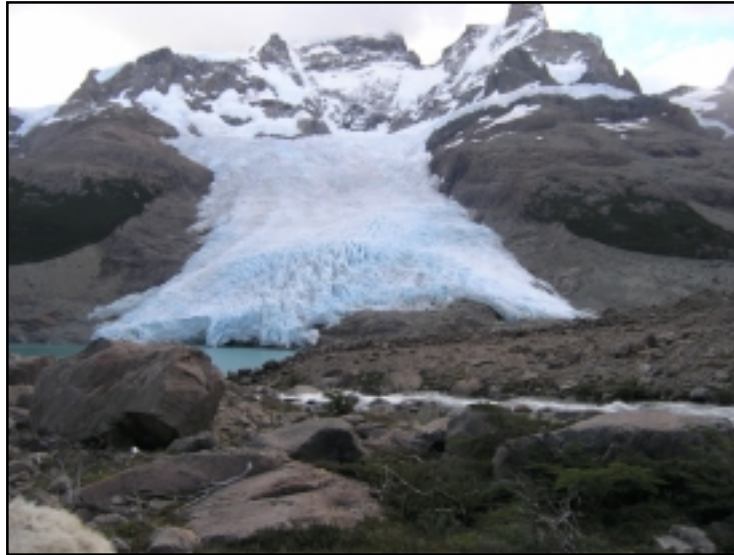


Approaching the ice cap

especially the wind - often unceasing and sometimes very strong. There are also windows of glorious weather.

Language

Castellano (Spanish!) is spoken throughout Argentina and Chile. Although it is a different dialect to that spoken in Spain, it is still rewarding to take time to learn some numbers and colloquial phrases, greetings etc. both before and during your visit. English is often not understood. Our guides always speak very good English.



Hanging glacier on Cerro Norte

DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

This itinerary is flexible and should be seen as a guide only. Local conditions, weather or fitness could lead to changes in our daily plans. All times and distances are approximate. Flight times may change slightly with revised schedules. 'B,L,D' refers to meals included in the trip cost, i.e. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner.

This trip is 16 days ex EL CALAFATE. The first and last days here refer to the days of arrival and departure from EL CALAFATE and may not be the days you depart from or arrive back home.

- DAY 1 Arrive El Calafate. Time to relax and look around the town which has ballooned in recent years with a tourist explosion. For a short visit however it is lively and you can buy any gear, maps, batteries etc. There are also some great places to eat. Lodge.
- DAY 2 What do the tourists come to El Calafate for? They come to see nearby Glacier Perito Moreno! It is one of the few glaciers in the world currently increasing in size rather than receding and we can stand just a few feet from the snout and watch it calving. It is an exciting shakedown day trip before the exertions begin. (B)
- DAY 3 **CERRO NORTE TREK:** We join a tourist boat trip to cross Lago Argentino to our starting point at the historic and remote Estancia Cristina. The lake is huge and at one stage we follow one of its arms to see the Uppsala glacier flowing off the icecap into the lake. After a mouthwatering 'asado' (BBQ lamb) we leave the more indulgent tourists behind and walk up the valley to the first camp. 3 hours. (B,L,D)
- DAY 4 A steady walk up the valley. Ahead is the moraine at the base of the Norte glacier but still a day away. This was grazing land in the past and we make a trail through woodland and meadow to a good campsite. 7 hours walk. (B,L,D)
- DAY 5 As we climb the Rio Norte valley the scenery becomes more alpine. We have great views as walk around several lakes with Cerro Norte and Moyano peak beginning to tower over us. A hanging glacier flows nearby almost to the valley floor. We camp at the foot of the the Moyano pass. 6-7 hours. (B,L,D)
- DAY 6 Fine views today at the pass (950m). The descent towards Viedma Lake follows a raggedy valley and could be the hardest of the trek. We camp by the lakeshore. 6 hours. (B,L,D)
- DAY 7 An appointment with a boat, in Patagonia, is never be taken for granted! Lago Viedma is enormous and around 20km wide at the point we cross. On the far side of the lake, the isolated township of El Chalten and behind, the great peaks and towers of Fitzroy rear skywards. (B,L,D)



Cerro Norte & Moyano Pass ahead

- DAY 8 A rest day! Time to relax, check out the town, some serious eating and finally some preparation for the big trip. (B,D)
- DAY 9 **ICE CAP TRAVERSE:** We walk easily to begin with, along the banks of the Rio Electrico beneath the towering granite walls of Fitzroy before hiking up towards the base of the Marconi Glacier. We camp by Lago Electrico only 20 mins from the glacier. 6 hours. 300m ascent. (B,L,D)
- DAY 10 We ascend the glacier and make our way quite steeply up towards Paso Marconi and our first sight of the wild heart of the icefield and the surrounding mountain massifs. Depending on the condition of the glacier and the amount of recent snow cover we may use crampons and rope to ensure safe passage. 6-7 hours. 800m ascent. Glacier Camp. (B,L,D)
- DAY 11 We cross the Paso Marconi early on, to reach the true Patagonian ice cap - a dramatic moment! From here we begin the ice cap traverse and head south behind and beneath the giants of the Fitzroy chain. If the snow is deep or unconsolidated, snow shoes may be used. We pass alongside the famous pinnacle of Cerro Torre with its bulging snow 'mushroom' summit towards the 'Circo de los Altares' and camp on the ice cap itself, dwarfed by our surroundings. 10km. 6 hours. (B,L,D)
- DAY 12 On one side is the legendary Cerro Torre range and on the other, the great expanse of the ice cap stretching away to our right, broken only by the isolated nunataaks rising out of the icefield. In this setting and hoping for good weather, we head up to the 'Laguna de los Esquies' exit from the ice field (lateral moraine of the Viedma Glacier). If the weather permits and the group are going well the plan would be to continue downhill towards the usual exit point of the Paso del Viento. Close to the pass amid the moraines is a small hut (refugio) in a sheltered grassy valley which we would make for. 14km. 7-8 hours. (B,L,D)
- DAY 13 We continue beyond the Paso del Viento (1550m) and with continual panoramic views of the ice cap and the Viedma glacier and lake, traverse over an upland area of attractive Andean steppe and small lakes, Cerro Huemul. We camp at the pass with a superb almost aerial view of the Viedma Glacier entering the huge lake beneath us. (B,L,D)



Camping on the icecap

- DAY 14 A spare day in case of bad weather during the trip.
- DAY 15 We descend easily down to the lakeshore and a rendezvous with our boat. A short trip and we board our bus at the jetty for a 30 mins ride back to El Chalten. Prepare for a lively gaucho's night and traditional 'asado' (giant local BBQ!) and maybe a few beers!
- DAY 16 A relaxed morning to pack, ready for the return to El Calafate. 'land only' trip ends here but for those with a 'flight inclusive' deal, a flight to Buenos Aires, an overnight hotel and a city tour on the following day before catching an evening international flight. (B)

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