



Southern Explorer

El Chalten to Ushuaia – 13 Days

TOUR DOSSIER

Mountains & Glaciers of Argentina & Chile

Explore remote southern Patagonia on this 13-day adventure. Discover some of South America's finest national parks including the Los Glaciares National Park, home to some of the world's most stunning ice formations; Torres Del Paine National Park famous for its granite pillars, lakes and mountains and Tierra Del Fuego National Park, located in one of the most southern regions of the world. This is a tour of overwhelming natural beauty!

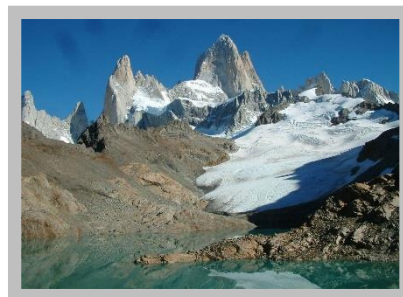


ITINERARY El Chalten - Ushuaia

Included Meals: B- Breakfast, L – Lunch, D - Dinner

Day 1: El Chalten (D)

After arriving into El Calafate airport, you will be met at the airport and transferred to El Chalten, located in the stunning Parque Nacional Los Glaciares. (Approximately 2.5hr drive including a short stop at a roadhouse.)



Day 2: El Chalten (B, L)

A full day hiking today, we meet our local guides and set off on one of the main hiking trails in the wonderful Los Glaciares National Park, (the Lago Torre* hike is our usual option). Enjoy spectacular scenery and obtain views of the magical Cerro Torre or the wonderful Mount Fitzroy. Keep your eyes peeled to spot regional birds including woodpeckers, caracaras and condors.

*The **Lago Torre** trail takes us first to a wonderful view point with a picture postcard shot of almost the entire mountain range including Cerro Torre and Mount Fitzroy. From this point, we can also see the Margarita Waterfall and the Rio Fitzroy. Continuing up to a saddleback in the mountain we are gifted with a view of the valley and can easily see the snow-capped Andes range. Descending into the valley and through the high deciduous beech tree forest over we hike over an old moraine and finish at Lake Torre which is flanked by the Cerro Torre Glacier.



The complete Cerro Torre hike requires a moderate level of fitness and is a full day of hiking. We offer a shorter hiking plan that enables you to still see the stunning surrounding scenery but you would need to do the full extension to see the Cerro Torre Glacier.

Day 3: El Chalten → El Calafate (B, L, D)

The Viedma Glacier is located at the Southern Patagonian Ice Field and is the largest glacier in Argentina. This half day activity begins by making our way to the Bahia Tunel port. We then head across by boat to the face of the glacier before landing on the rocky shore nearby. We have a 45 minute to one hour trek over the rocky promontory where the glacier use to rest and has now left the exposed polished rock. After spending some time viewing the face of the glacier we'll loop back around to head back to boat landing. During this unique experience, the expert guides will explain and show many glacial features and talk about significant changes that have occurred in recent times.

This activity requires sturdy trekking boots and a medium level of fitness. Passengers with vertigo or poor mobility are not advised to take part in this activity. Please note trekking poles are not allowed.

After this wonderful excursion, in the mid-afternoon, we will continue by road to El Calafate. Enroute we will stop at a historic homestead saloon with some famous outlaw visitors.

Day 4: El Calafate (B, L)

The Perito Moreno Glacier is one of the earth's most dynamic and accessible ice fields. Visiting this glacier, we can witness from a series of walkways huge chunks of ice breaking free from the face of the glacier and crashing with a mighty roar into the water.

We set off from town and take the old, unpaved road with no rush and plenty of time for bird and animal spotting. Along the way, we learn about the gauchos (cowboys) and life on the estancias before stopping at one of them for a coffee. On our way to the glacier our expert local guide will explain the amazing phenomena that this glacier is famous for and why it is considered stable and not retreating like many other glaciers in the area. If lucky, a highlight is watching and hearing giant chunks of ice plummet into the waters of Lake Argentina.

After a few hours of free time to explore the walkways we transfer to the port and enjoy a one-hour boat ride that brings us 300m (1000ft) from the glacier's wall. This is a wonderful way to get close to the glacier and appreciate its daunting size and power. After this amazing encounter, we head back to El Calafate town.

Day 5: El Calafate → Torres Del Paine (B, D)

Head back into Chile to Torres Del Paine, South Americas finest National Park and a trekker's paradise. Declared a Reserve of the Biosphere by UNESCO in 1978 it is located amongst the mountain range of the Andes and the Patagonian steppe. In this zone, the colossal towers and horns of granite and rock that have given world-wide fame to it, with heights of up to 3,050 meters above the sea level. The park preserves fragile ecosystems, numerous animals like guanacos, condors, ñandues (South American ostrich), foxes and the elusive puma.

The 3 hikes we cover inside the park are:

(a) Greys Glacier Hike (b) French Valley Hike (c) Los Torres Hike

Instead of walking these continuously, carrying all your hiking gear like on the Big W (a 4 day hike), we break it into three separate walks, covering different sections of the park and hiking an average of 15km (9.5mi) to 20km (12mi) each day. The group is assisted by expert local trekking guides who share information about the environment and guide you through the hiking trails.

If you are not hiking there are other activities available inside Torres Del Paine including fabulous horse riding or a boat trip to view the Grey Glacier.

However, please note these activities are subject to availability and minimum numbers and will incur an additional cost. Also, weather plays a big part in whether these activities will be on offer.



Day 6: Torres Del Paine (B, L, D)

Greys Glacier Trek (Easy – Moderate) 11km – 22km (7mi – 13mi)

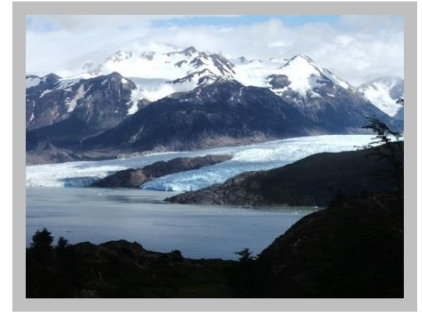
Grey Glacier is one of the principal tourist attractions located in Chile. As soon as you get to this place you will be breath taken with the lakes creamy blue colour dotted with icebergs floating and the Patagonia Icefield at the back.

Initially you will walk through a valley before climbing a steep incline, onto a ridge taking you first through a burnout forest and then into a green live forest.

A little further along the trail brings you to an elevated view of the Grey Lake. You hike along an exposed ridge line before reaching the Grey Glacier Lookout point. (Approx 2.5hrs)

If you are looking for a short hike this would be your turn around point, heading back the same way to the start of the trail. Continuing down another 2 hours further from this point you get to the main Refugio Grey Glacier view point which brings you a lot closer to this magnificent ice sheet. From here you have a magnificent view of the glacier across the water and usually the wonderful blue of the icebergs floating in the lake below. All viewpoints of the glacier are from a front on angle.

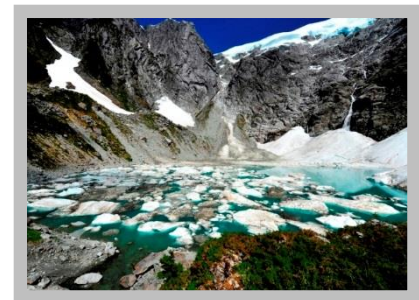
Full walk takes approximately 7 - 8 hours return including time for lunch and depending on your ability/physical strength.



Day 7: Torres Del Paine (B, L, D)

French Valley Hike (Moderate – Difficult) 15km – 22km (9mi – 13mi)

The French Valley is the most beautiful valley in the Torres del Paine National Park. It is a steep hike and offers incredible its unique panoramic views of Los Cuernos del Paine, the French Glacier and Lakes Nordenskjold, Pehoé, Scottsburg and Toro.



This walk starts at the same place as the Greys Glacier walk and between the hikes we stay overnight at the Paine Grande Refuge so you do not have to return across the lake to our hotel, effectively allowing you additional time to complete the hikes. This is a very different walk to the Greys Glacier. Slightly longer for the shorter walk and at times the track can be rocky and steep. The entrance to the valley is Italiano Camp (7.5km/4.5mi) and is our short hike stopping point. For those who continue up into the valley to the French Lookout the trail becomes steep with loose gravel and boulders. With a 300m/1000ft elevation gain you have wonderful views of the valley as well as the amazing view of mountains all around. You can sit, watch and hear ice crack and maybe even see a mini avalanche.

Full walk takes approximately 8 - 9 hours return including time for lunch and depending on your ability and physical strength.

Day 8: Torres Del Paine (B, L, D)

Las Torres Hike (Difficult) RTN: 19km (9mi – 11.5mi)

Hiking to view the iconic Las Torres (the Towers) is a challenging yet immensely satisfying hike, a highlight for all experienced trekkers. The Towers are the three massive granite columns that encircle the smaller Torres Glacier.



The Towers hike is by far the most strenuous of all the hikes. From the entrance, you have a 1.5km/1mi flat warm up to the start of the trailhead at Hosteria Las Torres. You start off climbing up the side of one of the mountains, all dirt paths and quite steep in gradient in areas. It then flattens out as you scale the side of the valley with a great river underneath you.

A short downhill section will bring you to the refugio Chileno. Here you can buy snacks and rest for a while and use the facilities. Although you can see the tips of the towers from the refugio, this hike is fully appreciated when you are able to hike the full length. Once you leave the refugio you start climbing again for about 1 hour crossing rivers and passing through a beautiful forest. The final 45 minutes are quite challenging as you scramble up boulders to the base of the towers.

**We offer a fantastic optional day for those unable to attempt the Towers. It involves heading to another section of the park, enjoying a shorter hike and visiting indigenous hand paintings while still having a view of the Towers.*

Full walk takes approximately 8 - 9 hours return including time for lunch and depending on your ability/physical strength.

NOTE REGARDING HIKING IN TORRES DEL PAINE

You are not obliged to continue to the furthestmost point on each trek but it is preferred that passengers have a reasonable level of fitness to enjoy this as a group. There is always the option to take a shorter, unguided hike or non-trekking excursions can be arranged subject to availability and minimum number requirements. Please advise our team if you are interested in finding out more about these options.

Day 9: Torres Del Paine → Punta Arenas (B, L, D)

Making our way out of the Torres Del Paine National Park we drive south to Punta Arenas. Tonight you will enjoy a meal prepared by a talented, local chef who takes local regional foods and gives you a taste of the variety of unusual tastes and flavours they have.

Day 10: Punta Arenas → Cerro Sombrero (B, D)

Enjoy your morning exploring Punta Arenas, a place of historical riches; see the mansions and museums of the wealthy wool barons who lived the high life during the boom of the 1890s or take on the wind as you walk along the beautiful promenade by the water's edge, before crossing the Straits of Magellan onto the island of Tierra del Fuego.

Day 11: Cerro Sombrero → Ushuaia (B, L)

In the morning, we visit a King Penguin colony, they are usually only found on sub Antarctic islands, such as the remote and difficult to access South Georgia and Falkland Islands. Observing them here is a unique opportunity!

We cross into Argentina and pass Lago Fagnano before heading over the Garibaldi Pass (500m/1500ft) and into the southernmost city in the world of Ushuaia. Now a major tourist town it is a great base for hiking, winter sports and starting point for many cruises to Antarctica.

Day 12: Ushuaia (B, D)

In the morning, you will embark the catamaran that will take you through the waters of Beagle Channel. Sailing along Ushuaia Bay you get an excellent panoramic view of the city framed by Andean mountains. Passing by Archipelago Bridges you'll reach Birds Island, where you will be able to appreciate the vast variety of sea birds that live in the area: cormorants, skuas, petrels, ducks, sea gulls, etc. Close to this place, you will see the Sea Lions and a unique opportunity to watch at the same time sea lions of two distinct species. You will finally get to Les Eclaireurs Lighthouse, the iconic symbol of the beagle channel before returning to Ushuaia.

In the afternoon we visit Tierra Del Fuego National Park where you will be able to enjoy the wonderful natural environment with visits to Ensenada Bay, Alakush Visitors Centre including a small museum learn about the indigenous Yamana, see an old beaver dam and finish at Lapataia Bay, "The End of the Road" where the end of the famous PanAmerican Highway is found more than 17000km/11000mi from where it begins.

Enjoy a special farewell dinner at one of Ushuaia's great restaurants.

Day 13: Ushuaia → Depart (B)

Depart Ushuaia with wonderful memories, and a new respect of our wonderful planet courtesy of Patagonia.

Note: The information regarding itinerary is given in good faith and is subject to change and /or cancellation, due to weather / political and / or country instabilities and general safety / road conditions etc. Any such changes and/or cancellations which are in our control will be decided by the crew and will be discussed with the group beforehand whenever possible.



INCLUSIONS

What's Included:

11 nights' accommodation in standard hotels; 1 night in a dorm hiking lodge (shared facilities)
Transport in our custom built all-terrain expedition vehicles
Approximately 11 Breakfasts, 8 Lunches, 9 Dinners
Service of an experienced western tour leader as well as local guides
Experienced Driver/Mechanic
All National Park Entrance fees

INCLUDED ACTIVITIES

ARGENTINA	Perito Moreno	Cuevas del las Manos (Hand Caves)
	El Chalten	Guided Hike in Los Glaciares National Park
	El Chalen	Guided Viedma Glacier Promontory Walk
	El Calafate	Guided Moreno Glacier Day Trip and Nautical Safari
CHILE	Torres N.Park	Guided Day Hikes (varies)
	Useless Bay	King Penguin Colony
	FERRY	Crossing the Straits of Magellan
ARGENTINA	Ushuaia	Guided Tierra del Fuego National Park Tour
	Ushuaia	Beagle Channel Boat Trip

Please refer to the VIVA EXPEDITIONS GROUP TRAVEL HANDBOOK for more detailed information

ARRIVING INTO EL CHALTEN

JOINING YOUR TOUR

The tour officially begins at 18:30 on Day 1 at our hotel in El Chalten where we will have a pre-departure meeting in which your Tour Leader / Driver will welcome you to South America and give you a run down on what to expect.

Please bring to this meeting

- 2 photocopies of your passport (details page with your photo)
- A copy of your travel insurance policy (including emergency 24 hour contact number & policy number)
- 1 photocopy of your Argentine Reciprocity Fee with barcode (Canadian passport holders only)

TOUR HOTEL

HOTEL KALENSHEN

Address: Av. Lionel Terry s/n, El Chalten, Santa Cruz, Argentina
Phone: (54) 2962 493 108
Web: www.kalenshen.com

Please not that due to availability the joining hotel may change. Any changes will be notified to the client.

EL CALAFATE AIRPORT TO THE TOUR HOTEL

Upon arrival into El Calafate airport (FTE) you will be met and will be transferred to El Chalten, a journey of approximately 3 hours (this transfer is included).

Please try to arrive in El Calafate (FTE) no later than midday the day before your tour begins to allow time for your transfer to El Chalten.

Many people choose to arrive a day or two before the tour begins. There are many very nice & well marked paths in the El Chalten area, a real trekker's paradise! We can book pre tour accommodation at our tour hotel for you and arrange your arrival transfer to suit.

Please ensure you book your pre tour packages as soon as possible after booking your tour or as soon as you have booked your flights to ensure availability.

All prices listed for pre-trip accommodation and airport transfers are approximate and subject to availability (for information on city stays and extensions contact us at info@vivaexpeditions.com).

CHANGING MONEY ON ARRIVAL

On arrival into El Calafate it is suggested that you change some currency or US dollars into Argentinean Pesos at one of the forex bureaus at the airport or in town. Alternatively you can withdraw some cash at an ATM either at the airport or in town.

TIPPING KITTY

South America follows closely behind the USA regarding tipping. Although not mandatory, tipping is very much part of the South American culture and we believe good travel etiquette is to follow the culture of the country you visit. On your Viva Expeditions tour you will have a number of local guides, helpers and special moments that will require a tip. We understand that knowing who, how much and when can be confusing so to alleviate this your Tour Leader will talk to you at your pre-departure meeting regarding a Tipping Kitty. This will enable you to pay upfront and not have to worry about each individual tip as this will be done on your behalf.

To give you an idea of tipping costs:

Lake District Discovery (9D)	U\$ 15.00	R40 +Carretera Austral (6D)	U\$ 20.00
Southern Explorer. (13D)	U\$ 55.00	Wild Patagonia (27D)	U\$ 85.00

PLEASE NOTE: Tipping is YOUR MONEY. At anytime you do not feel the tip is warranted the tipping money shall be refunded.

ENDING IN USHUAIA

Your tour ends on Day 13. There are no activities planned for this day so you may depart at whatever time suits you best.

Post tour transfers can be arranged with your tour leader during the trip or directly with the hotel on arrival into Ushuaia. This is not included in the tour price and can be paid locally.

Alternatively we can help you with any post tour arrangements you may require. Many people choose to spend an extra day or two in Ushuaia after the tour finishes allowing some extra time to explore the city and the surrounding area or travel on to an Antarctica Cruise. For more information simply contact us at info@vivaexpeditions.com.