Tour Code
BR4

ADVENTURESABROAD

BRAZIL, ARGENTINA & CHILE

27 days

Created on: 28 Mar, 2024

Day 1 Arrive in Manaus

Today we arrive in Manaus, gateway to the Amazon.

Amazonas is by far the largest of Brazil's states, covering an area that is almost a quarter of the national territory. Half of the Amazon River's 6275 km (4,000 mile) length is in Brazil with some 100-plus tributaries. Standing on the shores of the Rio Negro, 1500 km (900 miles) upriver from Belem and the point where the Amazon reaches the Atlantic, Manaus was originally a Portuguese settlement where a fort was built in 1669. The name of the city comes from the Manaos Indian tribe that inhabits the area.

Overnight in Manaus.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Manaus - Amazon: Amazon Exploration

Today we transfer from Manaus to our Amazon lodge. This transfer may be by road, by boat or a combination of both.

The very mention of the name Amazon conjures up images of adventure and mystery. Designated the world's largest rainforest and one of the world's largest rivers, Amazon defines the word "exotic". The term "rainforest" describes forests that grow in constant humid conditions. They can occur whenever the annual rainfall is above 2000 mm (80 inches) per year, and high temperatures favour plant development. The Amazon River is almost 6440 km (4,000 miles) long, with a volume of water equal to 11 times the volume of the Mississippi River. Amazonia, consisting mainly of forest, forms more than 50% of Brazil's area, though only 7% of its total population. Most of the Amazon's inhabitants live in and around a few cities including Manaus, a thousand miles from the ocean.

Using a comfortable lodge as a base, we will explore the Amazon's maze of forest and mysterious waters by boat and on foot. During our time here we hope to observe exotic birds such as parrots, toucans, and macaws. We also hope to spot sloths and monkeys during our exploration. You may even have the chance to see the "boto", a kind of river dolphin.

* NOTE: Our activities in the Amazon will vary depending upon seasonality, weather, and other considerations, at the discretion of your Tour Leader and local Amazon guides.

Overnight at an Amazon lodge.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 3 Amazon: Bird Watching, Forest Walks & Village Visits

Today we continue with our exploration of the Amazon. This morning we will enjoy an early morning canoe trip for bird watching, and to enjoy the morning sounds of the jungle. There are good chances of seeing large flocks of egrets and cormorants. During the day we will be sure to visit a Caboclo village, home to the local population whose ancestors are half Indian and half Portuguese. Many of these inhabitants make a living on manioc plantations, fishing, diverse fruit trees, rubber, Brazil-nut trees, wood and other extractive products. A night trip by boat or on foot will enable us to see nocturnal animals, sometimes including nighthawks, snakes, toro-rats, sloths and frogs.

SEASONALITY: in the rainy season, which roughly runs from mid-December to mid-May, the temperature is a bit cooler than the June-December dry season. The average daytime temperature in the rainy season is usually in the mid-20's C (80's F) with nighttime lows in the mid teens C (70's to high 60's). In the dry season the daytime temperature can go up to the mid-30's C (90's) though there is much variability and cool days are common. Nighttime temperatures during the dry season are usually in the mid-20's (70's), though there are also some very cool nights.

Is it desirable to travel to the Amazon in the rainy season? Yes! Even though it does rain more this time of year, it is also true that many plants have evolved to fruit and flower during the rainy season, which attracts birds and primates to the water's edge for us to observe. The gigantic

thunderstorms are a great pleasure to observe.

Overnight at an Amazon lodge.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 4 Amazon - Manaus: City Tour

This morning before returning to Manaus we will have another early morning excursion into the nearby waterways and jungle. We will walk through the forest with commentary by our local guide. Here we will learn about the unique flora of the region, and the many medicinal uses of the plant life that surrounds us. The Amazon rainforest has a huge live collection of flora species, and botanical experts say that in 2.5 acres of the forest you can find 700 different species of trees and twice that number of plants.

We then say goodbye to the Amazon and return to Manaus for a city tour that will include the Municipal Market and the famous Amazonas Theatre. The magnificent Manaus Opera House (also known as The Amazon Theatre) is a working historical landmark that currently accommodates the Amazonas Philharmonic and plays host to the annual Amazonas Opera Festival. Construction on the neo-classical style Teatro Amazonas began in the late 1880's at a time when the plantation barons of Manaus were flush with cash due to the thriving rubber export business. Sparing no expense, the barons imported artists, designers and materials from across Europe.

Overnight in Manaus.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Manaus - Brasilia: City Tour

This morning we fly to Brasilia, Brazil's modern, purpose-built capital. It was as far back as the early 1800's that the idea of an inland capital for Brazil was first discussed. A Salesian priest from Italy dreamed that a new, economically powerful civilization would rise up at the geographical centre of Brazil. It would take almost a century and a half before the dream was realized in 1960 by then President Juscelino Kubitschek.

This afternoon we will have a tour of this fascinating city. Our tour includes the chapel of Our Lady of Fatima; Dom Bosco's Church, one of the most beautiful buildings of the city. We will ascend the central TV Tower, with its lovely views over the entire city from its observatory platform. We will also stop at the memorial for Juscelino Kubitschek, the builder and founder of Brasilia and former President of Brazil.

During our time here we will see the cathedral and the Three Power Square - where we will see the Congress Building and Planalto Palace (the office of the President and supreme court).

Overnight in Brasilia.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Brasilia - Campo Grande - Pantanal

Our destination for today is the Pantanal, home to the highest concentration of wildlife in South America. We must first fly to Campo Grande, the gateway to the Pantanal. Upon arrival we transfer by road to the Pousada Aguape, situated 160 km (100 miles) from Campo Grande. The Aguape Ranch was founded 155 years ago and is still owned by the same family. Through the years the farm activities have diversified. The Ranch is home for a school, a regional
horse breeder, and a Hyacinth Macaw project, cattle ranching, and now a tourism area with a large variety and quantity of wildlife.

The Pousada Aguape is equipped with 14 air-conditioned rooms, each with a ceiling fan. The pousada has a swimming pool, bar, small gift shop and a restaurant. The great diversity of animal species in the region arises from vast differences in habitat. Savannah flood plains, dry forests and humid, temperate zones co-exist with grassy plains and scrubby vegetation. A total of over 80 mammal, 50 reptile, and 650 bird species have been identified here -
- however, none of them are indigenous to the area. Among the residents are 13 endangered species -- among them jaguar, otter and

anteater.

This afternoon after our arrival we will enjoy an open-vehicle safari. Here we are surrounded by nature with palm tree forests, open savanna and riverside terrain. The opportunity for wildlife viewing is great -- and we can hope to see anything from giant anteaters and armadillo to bat-eating fox and a plethora of bird species. Watch for the Jaribu Stork, Hyacinth Macaw and the Plumbeous Ibis.

Overnight in Pantanal region.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Pantanal Exploration

Today will be spent exploring this remarkable region. In its two distinct seasons, the Pantanal presents a constant, unequaled spectacle. From December to April is the flood season when the rivers overflow and spread themselves for miles uniting with the bays and creeks creating a true ocean of sweet water. This is a beautiful period of Pantaneira flora -- the green explodes and provides breeding ground for flora and water-loving fauna. Excursions at this time of year usually involve exciting exploration by boat/canoe for at least part of the time.

We may start our day with a safari walk through the lush riverside forests of the Aquidauana River. This walk allows us to experience up-close the natural beauty of the Pantanal region. We have the chance to explore this stunning area and its abundant wildlife, and learn all about the flora and fauna that make this place unique.

An evening game drive will allow us the chance to discover nocturnal species, as animals are best viewed during the cooler hours of the day. The Pantanal of South America is one of the most immense, pristine and biologically rich environments on the planet. Often referred to as the world's largest freshwater wetland system, with its extraordinarily concentrated and diverse flora and fauna, and a landscape spanning a variety of ecological sub-regions The Pantanal stands as one of the world's great natural wonders.

Overnight in the Pantanal region.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 8 Pantanal: Full Day

Today we get to continue our exploration of the Pantanal. The Pantanal is renowned for it spectacled caimans -- a crocodile species which grow up to 3m (10 feet) in length. Once nearly endangered, today there are nearly 10 million in existence in the Pantanal. In addition, the area's waterways are filled with brightly-coloured kingfisher and teem with the infamous piranha. Birds abound in the Pantanal and are more numerous than anywhere else in South
America. Look out for eagle, stork, nandu, jabiru, macaw and ibis.

One of our activities today we be a boat safari along the Aguidauana River. This area is an unparalleled wildlife sanctuary of spectacular beauty, an ecological paradise containing hundreds of species of birds, thousands of varieties of butterflies, myriad brightly-coloured flowers, and shoals of fish. Capuchin and Howler monkeys, capybaras, toucans, anacondas, caimans and tapirs help create an aquatic theater of sights and sounds.

There will also be the chance today to enjoy a horse ride. This will take place in the early morning or late afternoon in order to avoid the intense heat of the day. For many, horseback riding is the best way to get into the heart of the Pantanal, getting to places that normally cannot be reached by regular means of transportation.

Overnight in the Pantanal region.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 9 Pantanal - Campo Grande - Rio de Janeiro

Today we travel to Campo Grande from where we fly to Rio de Janeiro, the Ciudade Marvailhosa (marvelous city). Our sightseeing in Rio will

be a combination of bus and on-foot exploration; you must be prepared to be on your feet for some hours at a time.

Seven million Cariocas, as the inhabitants are called, are jammed into one of the world's most beautiful city setting -- between ocean and escarpment. This makes Rio one of the most densely populated places on earth. Cariocas pursue pleasures like no other people: beaches and the body beautiful, samba and football; cerveja (beer); and cachaca (sugar-cane rum). In Rio everything ends with samba -- football games, weddings, work, political demonstrations and, of course, a day at the beach. There's a lust for life, and a love of romance, music, dance and a talk that distinguishes the Cariocas from everyone else.

Overnight in Rio de Janeiro.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Rio de Janeiro: City Touring & Christ the Redeemer

Today we have a tour of Rio. The city is divided into a zona norte (north zone) and a zona sul (south zone) by the Serra da Carioca, steep mountains that are part of the Parque Nacional da Tijuca. These mountains descend to the edge of the city centre, where the zonas norte and sul meet.

Corcovado, one of these mountain peaks, offers us the best way to become familiar with the city's geography -- from it you have views of both zones. The statue Cristo Redentor (Christ the Redeemer), with his outstretched arms, gazes down on the Bahia da Guanabara and the landmark Pao de Acucar (Sugar Loaf). His left arm points toward the zona norte, and his right toward the zona sul suburbs of Copacabana, Ipanema, Leblon and beyond. We will go to the foot of the mountain from where we travel by an electric tramway car to the top. We have plenty of time at the summit to take in this world-famous view!

We continue with a drive through the city center. Here we will also enjoy a walking tour and a break for lunch. The Centro in Rio, or the city center, is the oldest neighbourhood and the site where Rio de Janeiro was founded. Today it is not only the historic core but also the commercial, administrative and financial center. We will see one of Rio's finest buildings, the Theatro Municipal, hidden amongst busy roads. The Metropolitan Cathedral of Rio was completed in 1979, and its unique architectural style was based on the Mayan architectural style of pyramid construction.

Later in our day we enjoy a sightseeing ride along Rio's beaches -- Leblon, Ipanema and Copacabana. One of the world's most famous beaches runs 4.5 km (3 miles) in front of one of the world's most densely populated residential areas. There is always something happening on the beach during the day and along the footpaths at night: drinking, singing, eating and all kinds of people checking out the scene; tourists watching Brazilians. From the scalloped beach you can see the granite slabs that surround the entrance to the bay -- a magnificent meeting of land and sea. Different parts of the beach attract different crowds.

Overnight in Rio de Janeiro.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Rio de Janeiro: City Touring, Sugarloaf Mountain & Free Time

Today we continue to explore this world-class city.

We will voyage to the top of Sugarloaf Mountain. From the top of this celebrated peak, the city, Baia de Guanabara, and the winding coastline are stretched out dazzling below. To reach the summit at a lofty 400 m (1,325 feet) it is necessary to take two cable cars. A clear day will supply the most spectacular of views: the uncurling arch of the Praia de Copacabana, its miles of tiles glistening in the sun's last rays. From the top you'll see Corcovado Mountain, with the massive statue of Cristo Redemtor (Christ the Redeemer), his arms extended in mercy and blessing.

We will stroll through parts of Santa Teresa, a small neighborhood located on top of the Santa Teresa hill. Close to the center of Rio, this district is famous for its winding, narrow streets that are a favourite spot for artists and tourists. Nearby is the Carioca Aqueduct. Located in the city center, this aqueduct was built in the middle of the 18th century to bring fresh water from the Carioca River to the population of the city. This is an impressive example of colonial architecture and engineering.

There will be some free time this afternoon for you to explore on your own and perhaps stroll along the beachside avenue nearby our hotel.

Overnight in Rio de Janeiro.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Rio de Janeiro - Iguacu Falls

This morning we fly to Iguacu Falls.

Made up of many cascades producing vast sprays of water, this is unquestionably one of the most spectacular waterfalls in the world!! The surrounding subtropical rainforest has over 2,000 species of vascular plants and is home to the typical wildlife of the region: tapirs, giant anteaters, howler monkeys, ocelots, jaguars and caymans. The Falls are formed by the Rio Iguacu, which has its source near Curitiba. Starting at an altitude of 1300 m (4,264 feet), the river snakes westward, picking up tributaries and increasing in size and power during its 1200 km (745 mile) journey. About 15 km (9 miles) before joining the Rio Parana, the Iguacu broadens out, and then plunges precipitously over an 80 m (263 foot) high cliff. The 275 interlinking cataracts extend nearly 3 km (2 miles) across the river.

On arrival, we'll head to the viewing area from where you will quickly appreciate the enormous size of the falls. From numerous spots all along the path there are excellent views, at first across the lower river at a point where it has narrowed to channel width. At the bottom of the path, where the river widens again, there's a catwalk leading out towards the falls themselves. Depending on the force of the river, the spray can be quite heavy so, if you have a camera, be sure to carry a plastic bag. Special walkways have been built along the path allowing visitors to get close up to this wonder of natural beauty and power.

Overnight at Iguacu Falls.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 IguaÃ§u Falls, Brazil - Iguazu Falls, Argentina

This morning we travel into Argentina where we have a different view of the falls -- spelled "Iguazu" in Spanish.

On the frontier with Brazil there is a gully -- La Garganta del Diablo (The Devil's Throat)* which is 150 metres (492 feet) wide and 700 metres (2,296 feet) long. We wander the paths and bridges along the upper and lower parts of the falls and the paths which go along the river from the observation point of the Bosetti falls to the quay. The plunging falls throw a fine drizzle up to 30 metres (98 feet) into the air, weaving countless rainbows in the sun. Be sure to bring rain-proof clothing.

Overnight at Iguazu Falls.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Iguazu Falls - Fly to Buenos Aires

You have a half-day free to revisit the paths along the upper and lower parts of the falls (optional cost) and the path that goes along the river from the observation point of the Bosetti Falls to the quay. The plunging falls throw a fine drizzle up to 30 m (98 feet) into the air, weaving countless rainbows in the sun. Be sure to take rain-proof clothing. The United Nations has declared Iguazu Falls a protected area of worldwide importance.

You can also take an optional boat ride to the base of the falls (extra cost), or the local bus to Iguazu Town where you can explore and observe where Argentine, Brazil, and Paraguay come together. You will need to be back in the hotel this afternoon to be ready for your transfer to the airport; please verify the check-out time from your hotel reception desk.

Later this afternoon we fly to Buenos Aires and transfer to our hotel.

Overnight in Buenos Aires.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 15 Buenos Aires: City Tour

Today we see the sights of this cosmopolitan city. In the early part of the 20th century, Argentina was one of the richest countries in the world. The grand public buildings of Buenos Aires reflect this opulent era. The city is known as the "Paris of South America" because of its wide boulevards and European-style architecture. Buenos Aires was founded for the second time in 1580 by Juan de Garay, just north of Mendoza's encampment. In accordance with Spanish law, he laid out the large Plaza del Fuerte (Fortress Plaza). It acquired its present name of Plaza de Mayo after the month of revolution in 1810. Our tour focuses on the major public buildings.

Catedral Metropolitana, built on the sight of the original colonial church was not completed until 1827. Not only is it considered a major religious landmark, but also a historic site of great importance. Here lies the tomb of Jose de San Martin, the man who (along with Simon Bolivar) liberated South America from Spanish rule in the early 1800's. The Plaza de Mayo is also home to Museo del Cabildo, the Presidential Palace (Casa Rosada), and the National Congress (Palacio del Congreso).

We also visit the Recoleta Cemetery where Buenos Aires' richest citizens are buried in magnificent marble tombs elaborately decorated with statues. The most internationally-famous person buried here is "Evita" Peron. While in BA, we will also visit La Boca neighbourhood, so named for its position at "the mouth" of the Riachuelo, and its role as the port of call for thousands of immigrants from Italy, Spain, and other European countries. Those settlers struggled, starved, hoped, and celebrated in this rough-and-tumble barrio. Today, one of the most photogenic and colourful parts of Buenos Aires, La Boca is the domain of the working class, bohemian artists, rabid soccer fans, and tango artists.

Ask your Tour Leader about the possibility of seeing an optional Tango Show this evening.

Overnight in Buenos Aires.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 16 Buenos Aires: Continued

Today we have a half-day WALKING tour.

Our first stop is the Centro Naval, one of the city's most exquisite buildings and a masterpiece of cast stone architecture. It's not generally open to the public, but sometimes they let you into the circular lobby.

The Kavanagh Building, at the time of its construction in 1936, was the tallest building in South America, standing at about 120 m (400 ft) with over 30 stories. Designed as a residential structure, it took more than 16 years to sell the apartments in this Art Deco building.

Palacio Paz is perhaps the most beautiful of the Beaux Arts mansions in Buenos Aires; the Circulo Militar looks plucked from the Loire Valley. It was the home of the Paz family and took almost 12 years to build; the patriarch who commissioned it died waiting.

The General Jose de San Martin Monument celebrates General Jose de San Martin, who battled against Spain in the wars of independence and is known as the founder of the Argentine nation. The Palacio San Martin is another of the grand mansions that line Plaza San Martin, this was the home of the powerful Anchorenas family whose prestige dated to colonial times in Argentina. The Islas Malvinas-Falkland Islands Memorial honors the more than 700 Argentines who died in the war over the Islas Malvinas/Falkland Islands chain in the brief war with Great Britain in early 1982.

The Torre Monumental (British Clock Tower) is a 1916 gift from the British community in Buenos Aires, along with all other things British, was renamed in response to the Islas Malvinas/Falkland Islands War and is called the Argentine Big Ben by some. Decorated with British royal imperial symbols, the base was partly destroyed by an angry mob during an Islas Malvinas-Falkland Islands memorial service. Inside the tower you'll find a small Buenos Aires City Tourism Information Office.

Retiro Station was opened in 1915 and was built with British technological assistance. Four British architects designed it, and the steel structure was made in Liverpool, England, and shipped to Argentina to be assembled.

Our tour ends in the Galerias Pacifico in time for your lunch break. This is the most famous shopping mall in Buenos Aires, opened in 1891.

The building was designed to recall the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan, with its long halls, glass cupola, and several tiers of shops.

Overnight in Buenos Aires.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 17 Buenos Aires - Fly to Bariloche

A direct flight from Buenos Aires brings us to Bariloche, located in the heart of the Lake District. The Nahuel Huapi National Park extends over 750,000 hectares, of which 330,000 is a National Reserve. Situated in the southwest of Neuquen Province and northwest of Rio Negro, it stretches from the Patagonian steppes to the high Andes. On account of abundant rainfall and summer melt from snowfields and glaciers, there is a great number of lakes and also rivers that flow either to the Atlantic or the Pacific oceans. Lake Nahuel Huapi, covering an area of 60,000 hectares, is the largest in the area.

This afternoon we visit the Francisco P. Moreno Patagonian Museum, inaugurated by National Parks in 1940. It is named after the famous explorer of the Andes and the Patagonian rivers, who donated the lands that were later transformed by the government into the first national park in Argentina. It has halls specializing in natural science, ethnography, pre-history and local and regional history. It also has a library and a bookstore.

Bariloche has a very strong Central European influence; most of the first settlers were of Swiss, German, or Northern Italian origin. These people gave the city its European style, with Swiss chalets, ceramics, chocolates, and neat shop windows. However something tells you that you are not in Europe; boats are seldom seen in the huge Nahuel Huapi Lake, the roads are swallowed up in the wilderness as soon as they leave the city and at night, there are no lights on the opposite shore of the lake.

You will have time to explore the lakeside and to visit Bariloche town with it's chocolate shops and excellent visitors' centre.

Overnight in the Bariloche area.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 18 Bariloche Area: Small Circuit

Today we have the classic half-day tour of the Bariloche region. We will get a general overview of the surrounding area along a 60 Km (40 mi) partial loop excursion, all on a paved road. Our outing heads westward from Bariloche on the highway to Llao Llao along the southern shore of Lake Nahuel Huapi. At Km 8, the road passes Playa Bonita, a small harbour and popular beach. Cerro Campanario, the Belltower Hill, is at Km 18 (mile 12), where our bus may stop on the outward leg or when returning. The view from the top of this hill, reached after a seven minute chairlift ride, is the highlight of the trip. The Catedral Ski Village, at the base of the ski slopes, and part of the city of Bariloche, are visible from this spectacular 360 degree look-out.

The tour continues toward St Eduard's chapel and the Llao Llao Hotel. It is after passing the hotel's golf course, at the 100 inch yearly rainfall boundary, that the Valdivian Rain Forest begins. This is a temperate rain forest, with vines canes and lush vegetation. Our tour continues through a thick beech forest surrounding the western Moreno Lake passing by the base of Lopez Mountain, a sheer 3650 m (12,000 ft) face of rock.

We'll have a short stop further along the road for a breathtaking view high above Moreno Lake, the Puerto Panuelo Harbour, Victoria Island and smaller islands on the lake. On the return trip, the road crosses the bridge between the Moreno lakes and then joins the main road back to Bariloche.

Overnight in the Bariloche area.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 19 Bariloche, Argentina - Lake Crossing - Puerto Varas, Chile

The Andean Lakes Crossing is the most scenic way to travel from Argentina to Chile. This spectacular crossing of the Andes takes us through lakes and mountain passes from Bariloche
to Puerto Varas, and occurs in a very well-orchestrated combination of boat and bus. Our luggage is handled for us -- you just sit back and enjoy the scenery.

After breakfast we leave by bus to Puerto Panuelo, where we will board the ship to navigate to the Puerto Blest Port, where we will arrive at 11:30. From there we will travel by bus to the Puerto Alegre Port at 13:30 where we will embark to navigate further. We then board a bus that will take us across the border to Chile at an altitude of only 976 m (3,200 ft); we continue on to Peula from which we embark towards Petrohue, sailing on the Lago Todos los Santos. Weather-permitting, we will have views of the Osorno Volcano, and the mountains, Puntiagudo and Tronador. Imposing views of the volcano Volcan Osorno y Calbuco dominate the landscape. A simple boxed lunch is provided today.

At +/- 19:30 we arrive in Puerto Varas, the City of Flowers (due to our late check-in, dinner on your own this evening).

Overnight in Puerto Varas.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 20 Puerto Varas - Fly to Punta Arenas - Torres del Paine

Today we fly to Punta Arenas and continue by road to Torres del Paine National Park, a full day of travel.

The Torres del Paine (Towers of Paine) are spectacular granite pillars which soar almost
vertically more than 2000 m (6,000 feet) above the Patagonian landscape. The park in which the high peaks sit may be considered the finest national park in all of South America. With turquoise lakes, roaring waterfalls, rivers and creeks, dense forests and sprawling glaciers, this is an unequalled destination.

Overnight at Torres del Paine.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 21 Torres del Paine National Park

Today we spend the entire day at Torres del Paine National Park.

Some say "Paine" come from the name of an early settler. Others say the name comes from an ancient Indigenous word meaning blue -- hearkening to the intense blue of the area's lakes. Whatever the name comes from or means, this is a spectacular park, comparable to Yellowstone or Yosemite in the US. Founded in 1959, Torres del Paine takes in 180,000 ha (450,000 acres). In 1978 UNESCO gave the park World Heritage status, recognizing it as a biosphere especially worthy of international recognition.

The park is part of the Paine Massif, which lies east of the high central Andean spine. These medium high mountains emerge suddenly from the plains of the Patagonian steppes. The mountains are granite, capped by crumbly sedimentary rock that used to lie on the valley floor. Before the park was acquired by the Chilean government, it belonged to ranchers who overgrazed and also burned down forests to increase pasture area.

The park is still recovering from this devastation, but it's a chance to see what nature can do to fix itself if given a chance. The glaciers of the park are in quick retreat -- up to 17 m (56 ft) a year for the last 90 years, creating a fascinating study of plant succession and soil build-up from bare rock to forest. The flora of the park ranges from grassland to southern beech forests. Many parts of the park were too remote for the cattle ranchers and exist today in a pristine state.

The animal stars of the park are the guanacos and the rheas. Rheas are an ostrich-like bird; guanacos are wild South American cameloids, related to the domesticated llama and alpaca. Native peoples hunted both across the plains, using every part for food and sheltering hide and feathers. When the Europeans came, the guanaco were slaughtered to make way for cattle, and almost became extinct.

We will travel through the park in our coach stopping at various points of interest and scenic viewpoints. We will also have an opportunity to walk one of the many easy-going trails that afford expansive views of the mountains, glaciers, and waterfalls for which Patagonia is famous.

Overnight at Torres del Paine.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 22 Torres del Paine, Chile - Calafate, Argentina

Today we travel by road to El Calafate, a resort town on Lake Argentino situated at the entrance to Los Glaciares National Park.

Named after a berry that grows in the area, the town of El Calafate was formerly a trading post for local ranchers, but in recent years tourism has spurred rapid growth. The centre of town and the lively main street Avenida del Libertador are lined with trees and a variety of trendy shops (try the calafate berry ice cream), restaurants, and bars.

This pleasant and colourful town will be our comfortable base for our glacier viewing in the area.

Overnight in Calafate.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 23 Calafate: Lago Argentina Glacier Cruise

Today we explore the glaciers, mountains, forests and lakes of Los Glaciares National Park on board a luxury cruise boat. We spend a full day relaxing on a stylish watercraft, taking in views of the Patagonian ice field. This morning we transfer the pier to join our cruise, which offers the best opportunity to visit the Spegazzini, Upsala, and the Perito Moreno glaciers in an intimate way.

We cruise out of the Upsala Channel toward the iceberg barrier, then to the largest glacier in the park; the Spegazzini Glacier. Continue to Puesto de las Vacas, where we will disembark and take a short guided walk through the icefields. During our journey, admire dramatic views and enjoy spectacular photo ops of the natural surroundings, including forests, glaciers, icefields, bays, and steppes.

We will then navigate toward Punta Avellaneda and Boca del Diablo to reach the Canal Spegazzini to see the glacier that bears the same name. The cruise will arrive at Puesto de Las Vacas (an extremely quiet bay in the Canal Spegazzini), where we can enjoy a guided walk with stunning panoramic views of the Spegazzini Glacier.

We continue toward Herminita Peninsula; the series of ice floes of the most varied colours and shapes, anticipates the proximity of Upsala Glacier. We will stop in front of the barrier of ice floes which at present is blocking the entrance to Canal Upsala. If the weather conditions are good we will observe the glaciers at a distance.

We continue to Canal de los Tempano to finally reach Perito Moreno Glacier. Huge icebergs on the glacier's 60 m (180 foot) high face calve and collapse into the Canal de los Tempanos as it advances about 100 m (300 feet) a year. The roar of the gigantic ice wall as it crashes into the surrounding channel is an unforgettable experience.

NOTE: Though weather may seem fine in Calafate, the weather on the water and near the glaciers can be completely different. You should be prepared with layered clothing and a warm hat.

Late afternoon we return to Calafate.

Overnight in Calafate.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 24 Calafate - Fly to Ushuaia

Today we fly to Ushuaia on the island of Tierra del Fuego.

Ushuaia is considered the world's southernmost city. In 1520, Magellan passed through the strait that now bears his name, in search of a sea

route to the spice islands of Asia. The Yahgan Indians built the fires that inspired Europeans to give this region its name -- "The Land of Fire". At first, very little attention was paid to this rocky and glacial shoreline, and its indigenous Indian population. It was not until the demise of Spain's colonial domination of the region in the late 1800's, that other Europeans began settling here. Since 1950, the town has played host to an important naval base, supporting Argentine claims in Antarctica. In 1870, the South American Missionary Society, a British-based organisation, made Ushuaia its first permanent outpost in the Fuego region.

You will have time to discover this interesting town. We suggest a visit to the old prison of Ushuaia located within the confines of the naval base. The penitentiary was constructed by the prisoners themselves between 1902 and 1920. Now this impressive complex houses the Antarctic Museum, the maritime museum, a modern art gallery as well as a restored wing of the prison, complete with cells inhabited by some of the infamous prisoners.

Overnight in Ushuaia.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 25 Tierra del Fuego National Park

If you are looking to connect with nature and the history of the southernmost city in the world, Tierra del Fuego National Park is the ideal place to do it.

The park protects 68,909 hectares and is the only one in Argentina that combines marine, forest and mountain environments giving shape to the sea coast, lakes, valleys, extensive peat bogs and magnificent forests dominated by trees such as lengas, guindos and ñires. All these environments form a unique scenery with the purest air you can breathe. Here you will find exuberant and diverse landscapes, inhabited by birds such as the picturesque cauquén marino, the steamer duck or the black-browed albatross. As you walk along the trails it is normal to come across grey and red foxes, and to hear the "tac, tac, tac" of a Magellanic woodpecker.

This place also features the history of the Yámanas, the first inhabitants of these lands. Paying attention, you can find mounds of mussel shells, known as "concheros" or shell middens that remind us that these lands have been inhabited for more than 10,000 years.

Our drive to the national park is short and scenic. We'll pass the world's southernmost golf course and make a stop at Escondido beach and its famous post office, where you can purchase postcards/stamps and send them on their long way homeward. At Lapatoia Bay we reach the southern end of the Pan-American Highway, which starts in Alaska and runs all the way down through Canada, the USA, Central and South America.

We'll also stop at Lago Roca (Lake Acigami), the main freshwater body of Tierra del Fuego National Park, which extends through Argentine and Chilean territory. We'll enjoy a nice easy walk along the shore, ending up at the Alakush Visitor Center, which features a restaurant, gift shop, and an interpretive room with information about the park and the first inhabitants who resided on the island.

Return to Ushuaia for dinner and overnight.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 26 Ushuaia: Beagle Channel Cruise

Today, weather-permitting, we include a cruise on the Beagle Channel. Running through the Tierra del Fuego archipelago, the Beagle Channel is a scenic and wonderfully calm strait named in 1830 after a charting voyage by the HMS Beagle—the ship that later became famous for carrying English evolutionalry biologist Charles Darwin on his five-year journey of discovery. The island of Tierra del Fuego is divided between Argentina and Chile and the Beagle Channel forms part of the border between the two countries.

In addition to spectacular scenery, we should see many species of marine mammals and birds, including a penguin colony -- the actual presence of penuins can rely on seasonality and recent conditions -- so no promises!

Overnight in Ushuaia.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 27 Departure

Departure from Ushuaia.

BUEN VIAJE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast