Tour Code
AR1

ADVENTURESABROAD

ARGENTINA & CHILE

'From the Pampas to the End of the World'

14 days

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Day 1 Arrival in Buenos Aires

Arrival in Buenos Aires.

Nearly 40% of the country's 33 million citizens live in Gran Buenos Aires (Greater Buenos Aires), which at first makes the city almost as imposing as New York or London. However, after a brief orientation, you will find that the compact city centre is accessible and easily explored on foot, by bus, taxi and underground.

Overnight in Buenos Aires.

Included Meal(s): Dinner

Day 2 Buenos Aires: City Touring

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 site 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 1800s. 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.

Overnight in Buenos Aires.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Buenos Aires - Tigre and the Parana Delta

This morning we continue exploring Buenos Aires with a walking tour through the elegant Retiro district. The Centro Naval is one of the city's most exquisite buildings, a masterpiece of cast stone architecture. The Kavanagh Building, constructed in 1936, was South America's tallest building at 120 metres. Palacio Paz is perhaps the most beautiful of the Beaux Arts mansions in Buenos Aires, taking almost 12 years to build. The General Jose de San Martin Monument celebrates the founder of the Argentine nation. The Torre Monumental, a 1916 gift from the British community, is decorated with royal imperial symbols.

Our walk concludes at the Galerias Pacifico, the city's most famous shopping arcade. Opened in 1891 and designed to recall Milan's Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, this architectural jewel features magnificent frescoes painted in 1946 by Argentina's most renowned muralists.

This afternoon we travel north to Tigre and the Paraná Delta, a dramatic change from urban Buenos Aires. Located 30 kilometres from downtown, Tigre sits where five rivers spread into an intricate network of channels and islands. We board a vessel for a cruise through these tranquil waterways, observing a unique way of life where island residents rely entirely on boats for transportation. The delta has long served as a weekend retreat for Porteños.

This evening we experience tango with dinner and a professional show. Born in La Boca's tenements in the late 1800s, tango emerged from the collision of European immigrants, African rhythms, and creole traditions, becoming Argentina's defining art form.

Overnight in Buenos Aires.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 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 5 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.

Balance of the day at leisure.

Overnight in the Bariloche area.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 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 travel by bus to Puerto Panuelo, where we'll board a ship to navigate across the serene waters to Puerto Blest Port. As we arrive at 11:30, we'll be treated to picturesque views of the surrounding mountains and lakes. After a short break, we'll board a bus to Puerto Alegre Port, where we'll embark on another scenic boat ride.

The journey takes you across the border into Chile at a relatively low altitude of 976 meters (3,200 feet), allowing you to take in the stunning vistas without the strain of high-altitude travel. As you continue on to Peula, we'll board a ship to sail across Lago Todos los Santos, with weather-permitting views of the majestic Osorno Volcano and the towering mountains Puntiagudo and Tronador. The imposing presence of Volcan Osorno and Calbuco dominates the landscape, creating an unforgettable backdrop for our journey.

As the sun begins to set, we'll arrive in Puerto Varas, affectionately known as the "City of Flowers." Due to our late check-in and substantial lunch, dinner will be on your own this evening.

Overnight in Puerto Varas.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 7 Puerto Varas - Fly to Puerto Natales - Torres del Paine

Today involves a significant journey as we travel by road to Puerto Montt, a gateway city in Chile's Lakes District, from where we'll catch a flight to Puerto Natales. The flight from Puerto Montt to Puerto Natales (+/- 2 hours). Upon arrival in Puerto Natales, a small, vibrant port city often considered the "gateway to Torres del Paine," we'll continue our journey by road directly to Torres del Paine National Park. The drive from Puerto Natales to the park entrance is approximately 110 kilometres (68 miles), usually taking about 1.5 to 2 hours, offering our first glimpses of the vast Patagonian landscape.

The park itself is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, renowned globally for its exceptional beauty and ecological significance. As we enter, the landscape begins to unfold, revealing why it's often considered the finest national park in all of South America. The star attractions, the Torres del Paine (Towers of Paine), are truly spectacular: granite pillars that pierce the sky, soaring almost vertically more than 2,000 metres (6,500 feet) above the Patagonian plains. Their sheer scale is humbling.

However, Torres del Paine is far more than just its iconic towers. The park is a tapestry of diverse ecosystems and dramatic scenery. We'll encounter brilliant turquoise lakes, fed by glacial melt, their colours shifting with the light. Roaring waterfalls and a network of rivers and creeks crisscross the terrain, often flanked by dense forests of native lenga and ñirre trees, which burst with vibrant colours in the autumn. Beyond the forested areas, the landscape opens into sprawling glaciers, remnants of the Patagonian Ice Field, with the most famous being Glacier Grey, where immense icebergs calve into the lake. Wildlife is also abundant; we'll be keeping an eye out for guanacos gracefully grazing, Andean condors circling high above, and perhaps even an elusive puma. This incredible combination of towering peaks, serene lakes, powerful rivers, ancient forests, and expansive glaciers truly makes Torres del Paine an unequalled destination for experiencing the raw majesty of Patagonia.

Overnight at Torres del Paine.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 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 9 Torres del Paine, Chile - Calafate, Argentina

Today marks another transition in our Patagonian adventure as we travel by road from Torres del Paine, making our way to El Calafate. This charming resort town, nestled on the shores of the expansive Lake Argentino, serves as our convenient base for exploring Los Glaciares National Park. The journey by road typically covers a distance of approximately 270 kilometres (167 miles) and involves crossing the border from Chile back into Argentina, a process that usually takes a few hours. As we drive, the dramatic landscapes of Patagonia continue to unfold, transitioning from the rugged peaks of Torres del Paine to the more rolling, arid steppe surrounding El Calafate.

El Calafate itself is named after a local berry, a small, dark fruit that grows in the area and is said to guarantee a return visit to Patagonia if you taste it – a delightful local legend! Historically, the town functioned as a trading post for ranchers in this remote region. However, in recent years, it has experienced significant growth, largely spurred by the influx of tourism. Despite this expansion, El Calafate retains a pleasant and welcoming atmosphere. The vibrant main street, Avenida del Libertador, is a central hub, lined with leafy trees and a colourful array of trendy shops where we might find unique souvenirs (perhaps some local crafts or even the famed calafate berry ice cream). There's also a good selection of inviting restaurants and cozy bars, offering opportunities to sample Patagonian cuisine and local beverages.

This pleasant and colourful town provides a comfortable and well-equipped base for our upcoming glacier viewing experiences in the area. It offers a balance of modern amenities within a setting that still feels connected to the wild, expansive beauty of Patagonia.

Overnight in Calafate.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 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 with lunch included on board. 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.

We'll be dropped off near the glacier where we can view it from land on a series of scenic boardwalks. We then return to Calafate by road.

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 (dinner on your own this evening).

Overnight in Calafate.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 11 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 12 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 combining marine, forest, and mountain environments. Magnificent forests of lengas, guindos, and ñires blanket valleys and peat bogs, forming unique scenery with some of the purest air you can breathe. The diverse landscapes are inhabited by birds such as the cauquén marino, steamer duck, and black-browed albatross. As you walk the trails, you may encounter grey and red foxes or hear the distinctive "tac, tac, tac" of a Magellanic woodpecker. This place also holds the history of the Yámanas, the first inhabitants of these lands. Paying attention, you can find mounds of mussel shells known as "concheros" that remind us these lands have been inhabited for more than 10,000 years.

Today's exploration includes a journey aboard the Tren del Fin del Mundo (End of the World Train), a narrow-gauge heritage railway following the route of the old prison railway. In the early 20th century, prisoners from Ushuaia's notorious penitentiary were transported along this route daily to fell timber in the surrounding forests. Today, the restored locomotive retraces those historic tracks through the Pipo River valley, past remnants of indigenous settlements, offering views of the Fuegian landscape that have changed little since those difficult days. Depending on scheduling, the train may serve as our route into the park or as part of our return, with coach transport completing the circuit.

Our scenic drive takes us past the world's southernmost golf course to Lapataia Bay, where the Pan-American Highway ends its journey from Alaska. We'll stop at Lago Roca for an easy shoreline walk, ending at the Alakush Visitor Center with its restaurant and interpretive exhibits about the park and its first inhabitants.

Overnight in Ushuaia.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 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 penguins can rely on seasonality and recent conditions -- so no promises!

Later you'll have time to discover this interesting town, including the previously mentioned old prison of Ushuaia and Antarctic Museum if not accomplished earlier.

Overnight in Ushuaia.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Departure

Departure from Ushuaia.

BUEN VIAJE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast