TREKKING PATAGONIA IN CHILE AND ARGENTINA

Trip 2419 11–23 January 2024

Trip Overview

Join us on a 13-day adventure to remote southern Patagonia, a land of superlatives – majestic pinnacle peaks, immense glaciers, fierce winds, and exotic animals. Accompanied by local guides, we’ll explore some of South America’s finest national parks, including Los Glaciares National Park and its stunning ice formations, and Torres del Paine National Park, which is famous for its granite pillars, lakes, and mountains.
Patagonia is the geographical region that lies at the southernmost tip of South America, lying in both Chile and Argentina. It has a well-deserved reputation for outstanding natural and scenic beauty. On our spectacular treks, we’ll witness dramatic sights of jagged peaks, massive glaciers, icebergs, and blue-green-colored lakes, and we’ll be led to several iconic massifs: Fitz Roy, Cerro Torre, and Cuernos and Torres del Paine. A combination of day hikes, trekking to full-service, backcountry rifugios (mountain huts), and guided tours will provide us a unique opportunity to experience this rugged, beautiful area of the world.

**Trip Difficulty**

This trip is rated **5 – Vigorous**. Overall, an ideal participant is in excellent physical condition, and able to hike 6 – 13 miles and 6 – 10 hours, including rest and photography breaks, with an elevation gain of 1,200 – 3,000 feet, per day for multiple consecutive days at a moderate pace while carrying a daypack with all standard and essential day hike supplies. For several days, participants will carry all necessary gear for overnights at a mountain hut.

**Itinerary Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>DESTINATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 Jan</td>
<td>On or before this date depart for Chile.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>11 Jan</td>
<td>Arrive Punta Arenas, Chile; transfer to local accommodation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>12 Jan</td>
<td>Morning boat ride to Magdalena Island to watch penguins, weather permitting. Afternoon bus ride to Puerto Natales.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>13 Jan</td>
<td>Take the bus to Torres del Paine National Park where we will start the world-famous “W” trek. Hike to Mirador de Las Torres, and back to Refugio Torres Norte.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>14 Jan</td>
<td>Hike to Cuernos along beautiful Lago Nordenskjöld.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>15 Jan</td>
<td>Hike to Paine Grande Lodge; side trip up the French Valley, weather permitting.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>16 Jan</td>
<td>Hike to Refugio Grey ending the W. Take a boat cruise to view Grey Glacier. Private charter van to Puerto Natales.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>17 Jan</td>
<td>Private charter van excursion from Puerto Natales to El Chaltén.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>18 Jan</td>
<td>Day hike to Laguna Torre for views of Cerro Torre and massive glaciers.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>19 Jan</td>
<td>Excursion to Vespignani glacier with self-guided trekking trails.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>20 Jan</td>
<td>Day hike to Laguna de los Tres for excellent views of Mt Fitz Roy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>21 Jan</td>
<td>Private charter van excursion from El Chaltén to El Calafate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>22 Jan</td>
<td>Sightseeing cruise for close-up view of Perito Moreno Glacier.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>23 Jan</td>
<td>Departure day.</td>
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Itinerary
*Meals included are indicated as breakfast = B, lunch = L, and dinner = D.

10 Jan – On or before this date, depart for Chile.

Day 1 Sunday 11 January – Participants will arrive in Punta Arenas (PUQ) on the Straits of Magellan, and arrange for a transfer to our local accommodation by taxi (excluded from the trip cost). Our official trip begins with a welcome dinner. (D)*

Day 2 Monday 12 January – In the morning, weather permitting, we will visit Magdalena Island to walk among the penguins. The island has been decreed the Los Pingüinos Natural Monument, as there are an estimated 120,000 Magellanic penguins residing there. A guide will deliver tour information in English and Spanish. In the afternoon we will take the bus to Puerto Natales, our jumping off point for our trek on the famous “W.” Luggage and items not needed for our 5-day trek of the “W” will be stored at our hostel in Puerto Natales. (B/D)

Day 3 Tuesday 13 January – After an early breakfast, we will take a bus to Torres del Paine National Park where we will start the “W” trek. We begin by dropping gear at Refugio Torres Norte and hiking to the Torres del Paine lookout (mirador), taking a break near Refugio Chileno on the way. The hike is approximately 7–8 hr round trip and 11.2 mi with 2,841’ elevation gain. When we return to our refugio, we will enjoy a hearty dinner. (B/D)

Day 4 Wednesday 14 January – We continue our trek by hiking to Domo Frances along the tranquil northern shores of Lago Nordenskjöld (5 hr/8.4 mi/820’ elevation gain). To our right, we will view the breathtaking spires of Los Cuernos. We will spend the night at Cuernos Cabin. (B/L/D)

Day 5 Thursday 15 January – Weather permitting, we will hike to the first Mirador going up the French Valley, and there, enjoy the sound of glaciers calving. Otherwise, we will hike directly to Paine Grande Lodge. The optional hike to the mirador is 2.5 hr and 2.45 mi with 935’ elevation gain. The hike to Paine Grande Lodge is 7.15 mi with 328’ elevation gain, and we expect it to take 4 hr. (B/L/D)
Day 6 Friday 16 January – We will finish the "W" trek with a hike to Refugio Grey. The hike is 6.8 mi with 672’ elevation gain, and we expect it to take 4 hr. Following the hike, the Navigation Grey III will take us to the edge of Grey Glacier, and then to Guarderia Grey where our private chartered van will provide a transfer to Puerto Natales. (B/L/D)

Day 7 Saturday 17 January – Via a private chartered van, we will transfer from Puerto Natales, Chile, to El Chaltén, Argentina, with stops at viewpoints along the way. (B/D)

Day 8 Sunday 18 January – In Los Glaciares, we will hike to Laguna Torre, and we expect magnificent views of the extraordinary rock spire of Cerro Torre and a sprawling mass of intersecting glaciers. We may take a side trip to Mirador Maestri for more views of Cerro Torre and Cordón Adela, a serrated ridge of snow-capped peaks between Cerro Grande and Cerro Torre. The hike is approximately 13 mi with 1,200’ elevation gain, and the book time is 6 hr (excluding the optional side trip). (B/D)
Day 10 Tuesday 20 January – From El Chaltén, we will hike to Campamento Poincenot and Laguna de los Tres, the lake at the foot of the iconic Monte Fitz Roy. At Campamento Poincenot, we look directly at the spires of the Fitz Roy massif. Further views of Fitz Roy from Laguna de los Tres and its surroundings will reward your climb of about 2,500’. The hike is 13 mi and book time is 8 hr. (B/D)

Day 11 Wednesday 21 January – Via a private chartered van, we will transfer to El Calafate. We will visit the National Park in El Calafate and a bird sanctuary, Laguna Nimez, which is an easy walk from our hostel. In the evening, we will enjoy views of Laguna Nimez from the upstairs deck. (B/D)
Day 12 Thursday 22 January – We will take an all-day cruise (8:30 AM – 6:00 PM) to the amazing Perito Moreno Glacier. The glacier front stands almost 200 feet above the water, and if we are lucky, we may witness ice calving from the glacier front. This beautiful spectacle of nature will provide the crowning memory of an incredible adventure. Our farewell dinner in El Calafate will mark the end of the official trip. (B/L/D)

Day 13 Friday 23 January – Departure day. Participants will arrange a transfer to the airport in El Calafate (FTE) for flights home or elsewhere. (B)

Participant Profile

Ideal participants:

● have a sense of adventure, a desire to learn about different cultures, a love of the natural environment, an appreciation for group travel, and a desire and ability to hike at a vigorous level for several days in a row;
● recognize they may be in closer quarters or feel less comfortable than they are used to at home or when traveling solo or in a small group; and
● will make it a priority to help others on the trip, contribute to the good of the group, and support the other participants in their enjoyment of the trip.

For additional details, please refer to the AMC Adventure Travel’s Terms and Conditions, Leaders’ Expectations of Participants.

Accommodations and Meals

The accommodations provided on this trip are a mix of small hotels, hostels, and full-service, backcountry huts (ie, refugios). At the hotels and hostels, we will have two persons/room with private bathrooms. Room accommodations in the refugios are typically bunkrooms (mixed gender) with shared bathrooms. The refugios provide sleeping bags but participants must bring a sleep sack/sleeping bag liner along with a towel for showers.

All breakfasts and dinners, and four lunches, are included.
Weather

In Patagonia in January, there will likely be warm days, cool but not cold nights, strong winds, and a possibility of rain, with temperatures ranging between lows in the 30s °F (6–8°C) and highs in the high 60s/low 70s °F (17-20 degrees Celsius). This is the height of growth season; the landscape is in full green. There will be a high probability of seeing wildlife, such as a variety of birds, guanacos, rheas, and possibly huemuls, a threatened species of deer.

Trip Extensions

Some participants may take the opportunity to travel to other places on their own and outside the scope of this trip and sponsorship of the AMC. Those persons doing so are acting on their own, and must recognize and acknowledge any trip extension is outside the AMC-approved trip, and as a result, the AMC takes no responsibility related to that travel and the associated risks. The official trip dates are 11–23 January 2024. Be aware the AMC-included emergency medical (limited) and evacuation insurance coverage is only valid while you are participating in the AMC trip. Consider purchasing additional insurance if you will be participating in a non-AMC-sanctioned extension.

What to Bring

A detailed packing list will be provided to participants at a later date. In addition to being prepared physically and mentally, participants are expected to be equipped with appropriate gear.
Trip Cost

The trip cost is US$5,399 per person for AMC members and US$5,499 per person for non-members. Join the AMC (currently $50 for an individual membership, $75 for a family membership, and $25 for a senior membership) here.

The cost will be adjusted in accordance with currency fluctuations, changes to the itinerary, and the best final arrangements that can be made by the trip leaders. Any cumulative increased cost or savings realized will be shared among the participants in accordance with AMC Adventure Travel policy.

Trip cost includes:

- lodging, all breakfast and dinners, and four lunches
- transportation between Punta Arenas, Puerto Natales, El Chaltén, and El Calafate as outlined in itinerary
- boat excursions in itinerary
- gratuities for local guides
- entrance fees to sites and excursions noted on the itinerary
- emergency medical (limited) and evacuation insurance coverage

Trip cost excludes:

- airfare
- some lunches, snacks, beverages, and incidental expenses
- local transportation for travels to the start of the trip, Punta Arenas, Chile
- local transportation for travels from the end of the trip, El Calafate, Argentina
- all other expenses not specifically noted herein, such as optional or unscheduled transportation or activities, individual travel insurance (eg, for travel delay, interruption, or cancelation, baggage loss), and alcoholic beverages

AMC Adventure Travel trips are offered on a nonprofit basis. The trip leaders are volunteers and are not compensated; the leaders’ trip and administrative costs for the trip are shared by the participants as reflected in the trip cost. The trip cost includes a surcharge for the administrative expense of the AMC Adventure Travel program.

Application Process

To apply, you must review, complete, & submit the application which consist of:

- Application
- Acknowledgement & Assumption of Risk & Release form
- Medical Questionnaire
- Deposit $2,000

Full link to the form at https://forms.office.com/r/gSbLCvpuzy
Upon receipt of all application materials and a deposit check, a trip leader will reach out to the applicant to verbally discuss the applicant’s capabilities and experience, and references may be requested. A participant will be accepted, and subsequently the participant’s check will be deposited, if the trip leaders have determined the participant and trip are a good match, and the trip is confirmed.

A final payment of $3,399 (member price) is due from accepted participants on 1 August 2023.

We expect a group size of 12 including the two trip leaders.

Applications received within two weeks of the distribution of the AMC’s Adventure Travel e-newsletter in which this trip is announced for the first time will be reviewed as a single group. (Sign-up for the AMC Adventure Travel e-newsletter at the bottom of this webpage.)

Terms and Conditions

The Adventure Travel Standard Terms and Conditions are an integral part of this prospectus:

- Cancellation Policy
- Leaders’ Right to Change Itinerary
- Leaders’ Expectations of Participants
- Trip Price
- Travel Documents
- Safety
- Activity Rating System

Photo Credits

All photos by Leslie Carson circa 2020.
Trip Leaders

Rami Haddad

Rami is an active AMC leader with Adventure Travel, Bicycle, & Ski committees. He travelled throughout the world on several trips for hiking, bicycle touring, & sightseeing. He has been on extended trekking, trail running, & bicycle tours through the White Mountains, 100 Mile Wilderness, Pacific Northwest, Japan, southern Patagonia, Switzerland, Hong Kong, South Africa, France, Italy, & Germany. Follow his adventures on blog, Instagram, & Strava.

Michelle Spaziani

Michelle is a volunteer Associate Leader with the AMC’s Adventure Travel program and hike guide with the AMC’s NH Chapter. She has summited the Northeast’s 115 4,000-footers, summited New Hampshire’s 48 4,000-footers in winter, section-hiked the ~260mi New England Trail, and adventured in 30+ US national parks and ~30 countries. She pursues her wanderlust with zeal, enjoys both solo and group travel and hiking, and has a strong affinity for the polar regions having visited Greenland, Iceland, and Antarctica. She is a certified Leave No Trace™ Trainer and Wilderness First Responder. She may be reached at MichelleSpazianiHikeAMC@hotmail.com.