

Day 1: El Calafate, Argentina

Our Patagonia Photo Expedition begins in Argentina's adventure capital of El Calafate, where we meet our Expedition Leader and fellow photographers at a welcome dinner this evening. On the edge of the Southern Patagonia Ice Field, El Calafate was originally a hub for wool traders in the early 20th century. It became an important tourism base when Los Glaciares National Park was created in 1937 and remains so today.

Day 2: El Calafate—Laguna Nimez / El Chalten

Our day begins with a walk at Laguna Nimez Nature Reserve, which is a designated Important Bird Area (IBA). Some 80 species are found here along the shoreline, wetland and nesting reed beds, Patagonian residents and migrators alike. Then it's time to leave El Calafate for El Chalten, a scenic half-day drive. We stop en route for a short walk to Chorillo Del Salto before arriving at Patagonia Eco Domes to settle in and relax before dinner. Short trails lead into wild natural surroundings, and there are magnificent views of Mount Fitz Roy right from the camp.

Day 3: Hiking from El Chalten

An advantage of staying at Patagonia Eco Domes, in addition to its peaceful, isolated setting, is its proximity to some of the most renowned views in Los Glaciares National Park. Today we enjoy a full-day hike to a classic viewpoint on Piedras Blancas Glacier—a long but relatively easy route, about 6 miles roundtrip. The trail takes us through native lenga (southern beech) forest, following the Rio Blanca, as we look for tiny white orchids and birds such as Magellanic woodpeckers, thorn-tailed rayadito and white-throated treerunner. Once we reach the lookout, our reward is stunning: the jagged blue glacier, with its seracs and icefalls, descends through the cirque below the Fitz Roy massif, flanked by sharp, dark gray peaks. At the glacier's base is a turquoise meltwater lake, with icebergs occasionally floating on its surface. We return by late afternoon, with time to relax in camp before dinner.

Day 4: Hiking from El Chalten / El Calafate

After breakfast, we start our drive back toward El Chalten, stopping en route for another dramatic hike. Options may include the viewpoint overlooking Cerro Torre, the finger-like needle that has daunted world-class alpinists for decades, or a walk to Laguna Capri for a different angle on Fitz Roy, which rises in sharp spires behind the lake. As always, we'll keep the pace and grade moderate, ensuring a comfortable approach to our destination. After our hike, it's time to travel back to El Calafate, leaving the Fitz Roy massif behind us as we head onto the sprawling steppe. We'll have dinner on arrival in El Calafate.

Day 5: Boat Cruise on Lago Argentino / Estancia Cristina

Board a catamaran this morning for photography on Lago Argentino, the country's largest lake and the third largest in South America. Icebergs frequently litter its teal-blue surface, as the lake is fed by several glaciers that flow down from the 6,500-square-mile Southern Patagonian Ice Field, one of the most extensive non-polar glaciated areas in the world. Across the lake at the head of one of its fjord-like arms lies Estancia Cristina, where we disembark to spend the night. Surrounded by pristine nature and inaccessible by road, the setting offers a rare opportunity to photograph the Patagonia wilderness in a truly remote location.

Established as a sheep farm in 1914 (an estancia is a working ranch in Patagonia), Estancia Cristina is contained within the bounds of Los Glaciares National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Once we check in to the lodge, we head out with our Expedition Leader on a hike. Don't forget to look up—Andean condors, with their 10-foot wingspans, are a common sight in the skies overhead, and a striking photography subject. After lunch, explore further on foot or in the ranch's 4x4 vehicles that take us deeper into the Rio Caterina Valley and to viewpoints on high. Solitude reigns on our private excursions, and we feel very small against the scale of this vast terrain. After an exciting day of photography, spend a peaceful night in your private suite in one of the ranch's five casas, with broad valley and mountain views showcased through panoramic bay windows.

Day 6: Estancia Cristina / Upsala Glacier / El Calafate

A stunning photo subject awaits this morning as we drive in 4x4 vehicles to a dramatic lookout over the massive expanse of Upsala Glacier. Thirty-seven miles long and six miles wide, it is the largest glacier on the South American continent. This is the only land-based viewpoint over this enormous river of ice that terminates in Lago Argentino, and with our close access from Estancia Cristina, we are able to capture photos before other visitors arrive. As with most of the world's glaciers, Upsala has been in rapid retreat, and the tremendous amount of ice it is constantly calving makes it difficult to view its face up close from the water. We see it from the classic overlook, however, with a crush of blue icebergs along its edge. After one more private walking tour from the estancia, followed by lunch, we board the catamaran back to El Calafate to spend two more nights.

Day 7: Los Glaciares National Park—Private Cruise to Perito Moreno Glacier

A private boat cruise on Lago Argentino takes us into another sector of Los Glaciares National Park where we come face to face with one of Patagonia's premier highlights: Perito Moreno Glacier. We disembark for a short hike along a secluded shoreline to arrive at a classic photo vantage point overlooking the glacier. The most famous of the more than 50 outlet glaciers spilling from the Southern Patagonia Ice Field, Perito Moreno is one of very few advancing glaciers on the planet. Almost 200 feet high, it winds down from the perpetual snowfields of the Andes to its terminus in the huge lake, calving icebergs into the turquoise water. Back aboard the boat, we get incredible close-ups of the glacier's imposing blue face, more than three miles across. Stepping ashore again, follow a maze of boardwalks offering varied views on the glacier and icebergs drifting on the lake.

Day 8: Estancia Cerro Guido—Conservation & Gaucho Traditions

Depart El Calafate this morning and cross the border into Chile, driving south on a scenic route to Estancia Cerro Guido, where we spend three nights. On arrival, we check in to the lodge and gather for an orientation to this impressive conservation project. Established by European pioneers at the end of the 19th century, this is the largest cattle ranch in the history of Chilean Patagonia, still a working livestock and agricultural enterprise on nearly a quarter-million acres. Dedicated to conservation leadership, the ranch has sought to achieve coexistence between livestock and wildlife, demonstrating that both can flourish in harmony. Improving the condition of its grasslands has attracted native fauna, including grazing guanacos. Given its location on a biological corridor with Torres del Paine National Park, wildlife on its vast expanse is abundant, and we frequently spot gray fox, Andean condor and Darwin's rhea, a large flightless bird that is a relative of the ostrich and stands three feet tall. We also hope to see puma, which are making a comeback.

Cattle and sheep are looked after by gauchos, the traditional Patagonia cowboys who roam the pastures on horseback, and we learn about their history and culture on a tour of the ranch today, which also showcases its conservation achievements. Visit the stable, learn how sheep dogs work the herds, and see the organic gardens where produce is grown to supply the kitchen that provides our fresh farm-to-table meals. Tuck in at night into luxuriously appointed accommodations in restored 1920s cottages built by original English pioneers.

Day 9: Cerro Guido Conservation Safari—Puma Restoration

Today holds exciting adventures as we learn in-depth about Cerro Guido's impressive conservation values, goals and achievements. On an all-day safari, we participate in Cerro Guido's puma research project, launched in 2019. Rise early this morning to head into the field with professional puma trackers dedicated full-time to studying pumas that live on the ranch. "Puma" is the name the Incas gave to this agile predator, which is also known as a cougar or mountain lion. Through observation with binoculars, review of camera traps, presentation of video material and informative talks, the research team shares their daily work with us, noting achievements and explaining challenges. We'll learn a great deal about Patagonia's most magnificent feline predator as well as the varied wildlife of the region and how to facilitate coexistence between livestock and these native dwellers in the wild. Along the way, we keep a close watch for elusive pumas, with cameras at the ready for sightings, which are increasingly frequent.

Day 10: Torres del Paine National Park / Patagonia Camp

Today we cross the steppe to reach Chile's famous Torres Del Paine National Park, stopping at overlooks to capture photos of the staggering views. A UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, the park is home to a host of wildlife including puma, guanaco, fox, huemul (South Andean deer) and armadillo. An impressive array of birdlife is here, too: look for eagles, hawks, rheas, buzzards, owls, flamingos and South American condors back from the brink of extinction. Dominating the horizon are the famous Torres del Paine—the Towers of Paine—dark igneous rock spires millions of years old.

Notice how the ecosystem changes as our journey continues and we move from sprawling tawny steppe into rolling mountain foothills covered in native beech forest. Our destination is Patagonia Camp, a "rustic luxury" outpost on Lago el Toro surrounded by 84,000 acres of private land adjacent to the national park. This unique ecolodge is comprised of 20 spacious yurts tucked within the forest, with views of the lake from private decks. Comfortably spaced apart for seclusion, the deluxe yurts feature the appointments of a fine hotel. Common amenities include a large shared lounge yurt, a dining room built of warm native wood with woven wool textiles, and expansive wooden terraces overlooking the lake and mountains beyond. This afternoon holds our first chance for an excursion into the wild nature surrounding us.

Days 11 & 12: Exploring Torres del Paine & Patagonia Camp

Our stay at Patagonia Camp offers a host of options and flexibility to tailor excursions around personal interests and Patagonia's notorious wind-and-weather whims. We'll have two Sprinter vans for our group's private use, plus two local guides who will join our Expedition Leader, allowing us to split up according to varied activity preferences.

A range of walks and hikes offer opportunities to observe the Paine massif from different angles, with roaming guanacos, Andean condors and native flora in the foreground. Classic Magellanic subarctic forest species are on display here—lenga, ñire and coihue, a tall evergreen that can reach 140 feet. We may spy the Magellanic woodpecker and, if we're lucky, the huemul, a rare Chilean deer that is a national symbol found on the coat of arms on Chile's flag. Guests who want to tackle more challenging hikes to famous national park destinations such as the French Valley, Base of the Towers or Mirador Condor will have an opportunity to do so. Mellow hike options with rewarding views include Mirador Los Cuernos, a vista overlooking the famous outcrop of dark granite horn-like spires. There are also easy outings that depart directly from camp, including Los Azules lookout and Toro's Waterfall. Those who prefer more independence can also choose self-guided walks from camp.

Lakes and waterfalls are highlights of Torres del Paine, with brilliant blue Lake Pehoe reflecting the serrated peaks like a mirror. We follow its shoreline to Salto Grande Falls, which thunders down from Lake Nordenskjold above. In the northern part of the park, the view from Laguna Azul offers a different angle on the imposing towers. We may also stop at Cascada del Rio Paine to admire this series of terraced waterfalls. As we explore, keep an eye out for wildlife. It's possible to spot pumas here, especially along the Sendero de La Fauna—the animals' trail—so named for the many guanacos that frequent the route. It winds through a favorite puma hunting ground where we may see remains of camelids that the tawny cats have preyed upon. High rock formations flank the path, providing dwellings and lookouts for these stealthy felines. While pumas are notoriously elusive, we have seen them increased regularity in recent seasons.

Day 13: Punta Arenas / Depart

Depart Patagonia Camp early this morning and drive approximately four hours south to Punta Arenas, the main airport in the southern part of Chilean Patagonia. Departing flights should be scheduled no earlier than 2:30 pm.