



A Practical Guide to Planning Your Next Vacation in Patagonia

Main Highlights, When and How to visit,
Accommodations and Travel Essentials



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Patagonia is **as unique as it is enormous**; a place where chunks of ice as large as double-decker buses break off vast glaciers into the ocean below. It is **an untamed wonderland** home to some of **the few remaining uninhabited places on Earth** and ecosystems and habitats that are rife with wildlife. For adventurous travellers, it is no wonder that it always ranks highly as a **once-in-a-lifetime destination** to visit.

Planning a holiday to Patagonia doesn't have to be the vast undertaking it may appear. **A well-established tourist infrastructure** in both Chilean and Argentine Patagonia makes travelling this huge area relatively straightforward. Research and, in some cases, the assistance of tour agencies will help you **to plan and arrange a comprehensive itinerary**.

This guide aims to provide you with **a complete range of practical advice** for organizing your holiday. It includes **unmissable destinations**, guidance for **when to travel** in Patagonia, **types of accommodation**, **forms of transport** and additional suggestions for **travel essentials** that will make your trip both comfortable and unforgettable.

1. Top Ten Patagonia Highlights Not to Miss

An area that encompasses **the southern regions of Chile and Argentina**, Patagonia covers over 260,000-sq. miles (673,000-sq. km). It is for this reason that it's difficult to see all of the ten highlights on this list in one holiday. Depending upon the length of your vacation, it's wise to **concentrate on one region** or plan to **take a number of long distance flights or bus journeys** to help you cover the necessary distances.

Highlights of Chilean Patagonia

1. Torres del Paine National Park, Magallanes Region

A trip to Patagonia is lacking without a visit to the **world-renowned Torres del Paine National Park**. The main attractions are **the 'W' and Circuit hikes**: two trekking routes which explore the barren, snow-capped mountains and glacial-fed lakes of this region.

Named in 2013 by National Geographic **as the fifth most beautiful place in the world**, it's accessible from Puerto Natales, the main city in this part of Patagonia. Accommodations can be booked online and range from **serviced campgrounds to luxurious hotel rooms**.

2. Cape Horn, Magallanes Region

For years, the passageway around Cape Horn was **the only navigable route between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans** and came to be known as **the "Ends of the Earth"**. An estimated **800 ships and over 10,000 sailors** were lost here between the 16th and 20th centuries; a sad part of the region's history that is now commemorated by **the Cape Horn Monument** built on the island in 1992.



These days, the passage to **Hornos Island** remains stormy and the gale force winds that are known as **the “furious fifties”** and **“screaming sixties”** make a trip here a complete adventure - but that’s all part of the appeal. Visitors can step ashore and **visit the sole lodgings on the island** - a lighthouse staffed by a member of the Chilean navy and his family - on what remains a barren yet captivating **symbol of Patagonian and international history**.

3. Patagonia Park, Aisén Region

Patagonia Park is a recently opened park established by **the Tompkins Conservation group**. An area dedicated to protecting the Patagonian steppe, rugged mountains and its endemic, rare and endangered species of wildlife, it has various activities for those seeking a few days of **adventure in the secluded Patagonian countryside**.

Hikes pass through wild landscapes to arrive at turquoise river waters or to reach viewpoints for admiring Lago Cochrane and Mt. San Lorenzo – two of the many landmarks in the park.

With an incredible diversity of ecosystems, over **100 different species of birds** have been spotted here, making it an excellent location for bird and wildlife watching. Visitors can arrange **fly fishing and mountain biking**, while a variety of comfortable accommodations providing lodging.

4. The Carretera Austral, Los Lagos/Aisén Region

The Carretera Austral (also known as Ruta 7), passes from Puerto Montt in the north of Patagonia to Villa O'Higgins in the south of the Aisén Region. Encountering a number of small, picturesque villages and conical volcanoes along the way, this drive is probably **the most scenic in all of Patagonia**.

Highlights include the **hot springs** at Puyuhuapi and the spectacular **Hanging Glacier** in nearby Queulat National Park. Further south, **the San Rafael Lagoon and Glacier** demand a visit, particularly given the fact that the latter is receding at a worryingly rapid pace. **Lago General Carrera and the Marble Cathedral** at Río Tranquilo also attract thousands of visitors per year; motorboat tours take tourists around the lake to admire the rich stripes of colour that run through the marble of which this cave complex is composed.

5. Chiloé Island, Los Lagos Region

Chile's second largest island, **Chiloé is an archipelago** located a short ferry ride from Puerto Montt. This island **combines history and access to nature** along with a **distinctive culture** that separates it from mainland Chile. One of the most enduring features of Chiloé's unique character is visible in **the 16 unique UNESCO World Heritage recognized wooden churches** that are scattered across the main island and the various islets that make up Chiloé. In the north, Chiloé also puts visitors in close contact with wildlife at **the Puñihuil penguin colony**, which is a shared breeding site for Humboldt and Magellanic penguins and visitable by Zodiac boat.

Overlooking the bay at Castro, one of the island's main towns, tourists can photograph the **traditional fishermen dwellings called palafitos** which are built on stilts and remain one of the most colorful and symbolic landmarks here. The island's food also expresses Chiloé's exciting cultural history. Visitors are recommended to try **the local dish, curanto**, whose ingredients include shellfish, meat, potatoes and vegetables, and which is slow-cooked **using the Polynesian method** of placing hot rocks in an earthen pit.

Argentine Patagonia

1. Ushuaia and Río Grande, Tierra del Fuego Region

Ushuaia in the Tierra del Fuego region of Argentina claims to be **the southernmost city in the world** and is the gateway to exploring the ocean and coastline here. Large cruise ships navigate through **the Beagle Channel** - a stretch of water that took its name from the first voyage of the historic HMS Beagle. Others cross into Chilean territory to **Cape Horn**.

Hiking opportunities are extensive in the nearby **Tierra del Fuego National Park** where astounding vistas of the Beagle Channel are guaranteed and the trekking trails pass through windswept, **subantarctic forest recognized for its biological richness**. Nearby Río Grande, a few hours north, also merits a visit. In this coastal city, world-class fly fishing is available for fishing enthusiasts and a short distance away, tourists can enjoy an Argentine asado (bbq) and learn about the gaucho way of life in **the traditional estancias (ranches)** situated in these southern Patagonian grasslands.



2. Perito Moreno and Los Glaciares National Park, Santa Cruz Region

Los Glaciares is a **UNESCO World Heritage national park** which contains the Patagonian glacier that draws the most crowds: **El Perito Moreno**. This enormous 97-sq. mile (250-sq. km) mass of ice is one of the few Patagonian glaciers that continues to advance. Boardwalks built at the foot of the glacier provide spectators with the perfect vantage point for **viewing the chunks of ice which calve** into the milky-blue waters of Lago Argentino. Boats also approach the terminus of El Perito Moreno to get spectators even closer to the action.

The Los Glaciares National Park is rated as having **some of the best walking territory in Argentine Patagonia**. Monte Fitzroy, located in the northern extremes of the park, is an extraordinary **set of granite peaks towering over a landscape of sky-reflecting lakes and forests** made up of species such as the lenga beech, ñirre and guindo trees.

3. The Valdés Peninsula, Chubut Region

Considered one of the prime locations for marine wildlife watching, **the Valdés Peninsula near Puerto Madryn** has sea lions, elephant seals and fur seals living in enormous colonies along its beaches and coves. **The endangered southern right whale** breeds along the coast and can be spotted in the main bay, the Golfo Nuevo, while **the pod of orcas** that live here for some of the year has developed a unique hunting strategy that must be seen to be appreciated. Visitors watch as these killer whales beach themselves in order to capture their prey of sea lions and elephant seals.

Further along the coastline, **over a million and a half Magellanic penguins** return to the Punta Tombo rookery each year, which is considered the largest and most important Magellanic penguin breeding ground in South America.

4. Welsh Patagonia, Chubut Region

Nowhere is the migration of different nationalities to Patagonia more obvious and more celebrated than in **the area surrounding Puerto Madryn**. Here, towns are inhabited by the Welsh settlers who came to Argentina over 150 years ago and this region rose to fame in **Bruce Chatwin's pivotal travel novel, "In Patagonia"**.

Welsh Patagonia includes the towns of **Trevelin, Trelew and Gaiman**, with the latter being the best example of how Welsh culture and ancestry have been preserved. A number of museums about the settlers grace the streets of Gaiman, and visitors come to sample traditional afternoon tea in one of the many **cosy tea houses**. These are made even more enchanting by the Welsh tea towels and other Welsh memorabilia which display the locals' proud origins.

5. Bariloche and the Nahuel Huapi National Park, Río Negro

At the very northern tip of Patagonia, **Bariloche** is a city renowned for its **chocolate and Alpine-style buildings** - a legacy of the German-speaking immigrants who settled here in the late 1900s. Set in the picturesque landscape of the Nahuel Huapi National Park, the area surrounding the city is **characterized by huge lakes and soaring mountains**. A high level of snow falls here during winter, so the area encompasses a **number of ski resorts** open between June and October. Tourists are also attracted to Bariloche during the summer season when the ski runs become hiking trails with stunning views across the entire national park.



Sunset at El Perito Moreno Glacier in Los Glaciares National Park, Argentina

2. When to visit

Choosing when to visit Patagonia is **an essential consideration before planning your itinerary**, as parts of the country are less accessible during the snowy winter months. Although weather in Patagonia is **noted for its unpredictability**, certain periods of the year are still better suited to particular outdoor activities. If visiting with the plan to see some of Patagonia's extensive wildlife, migration patterns and breeding times are worth considering before you book your trip.

Average Seasonal Temperatures in Patagonia

Season	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Temperatures	Sept-Nov	Dec-Feb	March-May	June-Aug
Minimum	36°F (2°C)	41°F (5°C)	32°F (0°C)	28°F (-2°C)
Maximum	64°F (18°C)	72°F (22°C)	50°F (10°C)	43°F (6°C)

Temperatures and climatic conditions can **vary significantly between the different regions** of Patagonia and night time at altitude can see even colder temperatures. The piercing Patagonian wind can also make the ambient temperature feel around 30°F (6°C) cooler.

Best Seasons for Visiting Patagonia



Season	Weather Conditions and Recommended Activities
Spring (Sept-Nov)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring is characterized by temperate weather with occasional cold, overcast days and high winds. • Patagonia receives on average between 12-16 hours of daylight during this period. • Fewer tourists visit during spring, which makes prices lower and facilities less crowded. • This season is perfect for fly fishing from November, hiking and photography; spring is the time when the landscape awakens with blooms and the scenery is scattered with color.
Summer (Dec-Feb)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The weather during the summer months normally consists of warm days with up to 14-17 hours of daylight. • This is the high season for tourists, making prices more expensive and booking at least three months in advance essential. • Chileans holiday in January and February, so the main tourist attractions are often more crowded during these months. • Hiking, kayaking and rafting, horse riding, bird watching, fly fishing, photography and camping are possible at this time of the year.
Fall (March-May)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During fall, Patagonia sees sunny, clear skies and warm days in the northern regions. Cooler temperatures and cold nights reign in the south, including snowfall towards the very end of this season. • Days are shorter, with between 9-13 hours of daylight.

<p>Fall (March- May)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The beautiful colors of fall transform the otherwise green and white landscape, making it a favored time for photographers. • Prices are lower and visitor numbers drop during this period, although accommodations may shut down and tours become discontinued towards the end of April. • Conditions, particularly at the start of this season, are ideal for photography, hiking, fly fishing, horse riding, kayaking and rafting, and camping.
<p>Winter (June- Aug)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winter in Patagonia includes cold, short days with very chilly nights and snowfall in the mountains and most of the southern regions. • On average per day, Patagonia receives 8-10 hours of daylight. • Tourist facilities, including tours and accommodations, are often closed or not running during this period. • High levels of snowfall make skiing and snowboarding in the ski resorts the main attraction for visitors.

Best Times for Viewing Different Wildlife

Marine Wildlife

Both the Atlantic coast in the east of Argentine Patagonia and the Pacific Ocean, which flows into the fjords in the west of Chile, are thriving hubs of marine wildlife. To see many of these animals, the summer and fall seasons are the best for visiting the colonies or taking a tour out onto the water.

<p>Gentoo Penguin Visible: September to April Best locations to see them: Tierra del Fuego.</p>	
<p>Magellanic Penguin Visible: September to May Best locations to see them: Chilean fjords, Chiloé Island, Peninsula Valdés, Magdalena Island and Tierra del Fuego.</p>	

King Penguin

Visible: All year round

Best locations to see them: Tierra del Fuego.



Humpback Whale

Visible: December to May

Best locations to see them: Chilean fjords.



Blue Whale

Visible: December to May

Best locations to see them: Chiloé Island.



Southern Right Whale

Visible: June to September

Best locations to see them: Peninsula Valdés.



Orca

Visible: December, March and April

Best locations to see them: Chilean Fjords (December) and Peninsula Valdés (March and April).



Patagonian Wildlife On Land

- › At any time throughout the year, you're likely to spot the wild cousin of the llama - the guanaco - grazing in the Patagonian grasslands or mountains.
- › The elusive puma can be sighted in Tierra del Fuego and the Aisén Regions of Chile, particularly in Torres del Paine National Park.
- › Andean condors soar through the skies in Torres del Paine and whole groups can be spied feasting upon guanacos.
- › The shy, endangered South Andean Deer or huemul also inhabits Torres del Paine and the Bernardo O'Higgins National Park on the border with Argentina. The latter region has a population of around 75 huemul, and it is believed that only around 15,000 individuals remain in the whole continent.

3. Accommodations

As tourism has increased, so has **the range and quality of the accommodations** that you can expect to find here. During the summer months, accommodations should be booked **at least three months in advance**, as refugios and hotels, particularly in some of the prime destinations such as Torres del Paine, will be fully booked during this period. Accommodations during the spring and fall seasons in popular tourist destinations should also be booked in advance and prices are often lower during these periods. In winter, it is best to confirm that your lodgings are open, as some companies close for the season.

Hotels

A swathe of luxury hotels can be booked throughout Chilean and Argentine Patagonia. The larger towns of Puerto Natales, **Punta Arenas, Bariloche and Ushuaia** unsurprisingly offer the best selection of top-end accommodations, but **four and five star options** are possible even in some of the more remote locations.

El Calafate, Chaltén, Torres del Paine and various smaller towns along the Carretera Austral can surprise with the quality of their hotels. In some cases, accommodations include **a commitment to eco-sustainability and unbridled access to splendid scenery**. Boutique and exclusive hotels generally provide locally-sourced dining options and lengthy wine lists with vintages hailing from the internationally-renowned wine regions further north in Chile and Argentina.



Exclusive hotel accommodations are available in remote, picturesque locations throughout Patagonia.

How to Find Patagonian Hotels

[I-Escape](#) comprises a list of **boutique hotels** that are bookable online, while [Booking.com](#) has a list of **thousands of properties**, each with extensive reviews to help you make your selection. [Trip Advisor](#) also provides hundreds of **searchable luxury accommodations** in Patagonia, while [Hotels.com](#) offers a similar service.

Prices for hotels in Patagonia start from **\$75 per night for a double room**. All-inclusive packages can be arranged directly with hotels and may include airport transfers, accommodation and full-board. Tours will depend upon the location of the hotel, but may include horseback riding through rugged countryside or hiking in any one of Patagonia's impressive areas of natural beauty.

Estancias

Working sheep or cattle ranches with comfortable accommodations are mainly, but not exclusively, found on the Argentine side of Patagonia, where the windswept steppe is encircled by low mountains. This form of accommodation will bring you into contact with local people, from gauchos to estancia owners, many of whom who have worked the land for generations. **Spending a couple of nights in an estancia** is a rewarding chance to find yourself in the depths of the countryside and to learn about **the daily lives of the Patagonian people**.

Dining options range from **the traditional Argentine asado**, to **high quality, seasonal menus**, while views of the surrounding, largely uninhabited wilderness will be second to none. Activities may include **horse riding tours** on criollo horses, whose strong, sure-footed and responsive nature make them ideally suited to the harsh Patagonian terrain. Fishing in remote lagoons, trekking through ancient forests or exploring the day-to-day life on these working ranches, which could include a cattle drive or sheep shearing, can also be organized as part of your visit.

How to Find Patagonian Estancias

Estancias are best booked as part of an organized tour through Patagonia. **Visit the Australis [agencies and operators finder](#)** for further information about companies offering this service in your home country.

Camping

Camping opportunities in Patagonia abound. During the summer months, camping can be a fantastic way to sleep under the stars and **watch sunrises over some of Patagonia's wildest spots**. **As some of the luxury camping options** are equipped with central heating and homely log fires, this form of accommodation can even be experienced during the winter.

Whatever your preconceptions of camping, it doesn't have to be cold mornings and lumpy mattresses: luxury can be found even in the wild heart of Patagonia. **Yurts and geodesic domes scatter mountain sides, while lodges and luxuriously cozy cabañas** with skylights for watching the impressive clearness of the Patagonian night sky are also available.

How to Find Patagonian Camping Accommodations

[Glamping.com](#) offers a selection of **the best "glamping" ("glamorous camping") options** that are bookable online. Prices start from **\$190 for an en suite double** and many of these luxury campgrounds include access to Wi-Fi. All-inclusive packages can be arranged, particularly with those campgrounds located in the Torres del Paine National Park.

Cruises

Boarded on all sides by coastline, **Patagonia has seen a rise in cruise tours** that enable visitors to go where few others have been before. Many of the most notable explore the wilderness of the very southern extremities of the continent and deliver **a degree of luxury that is in line with the most exclusive Patagonian hotels**.

Starting from Punta Arenas in the Magallanes Region, Chile, or Ushuaia in Tierra del Fuego, Argentina, cruise ships pass through **sections of the historic Beagle Channel**, encounter tidewater glaciers plunging into the ocean below and visit colonies of **Magellanic penguins in the Chilean fjords**. Some even stop off at **Cape Horn** to appreciate the rugged desolation of this promontory overlooking the stormy Drake Passage, and where they can pay their respects to the thousands of sailors who lost their lives navigating these seas.

Cruises include **all-inclusive services** such as buffet lunches and four-course evening meals, open bars and on-board libraries. **Comfortable and spacious en suite accommodations** with expansive windows for viewing the unfolding landscape is also guaranteed. These cruises make use of an **onboard staff of multi-discipline experts** who deliver detailed lectures about the history, geography and environment of the locations visited on the cruise.



Stella Australis Ship.

How to Find Patagonian Cruises

[Australis](#) have designed some of **the best cruises** in their class on their ship, **the Stella Australis**. Three night cruises start from **\$1,189 per person**.

4. Getting Around in Patagonia

Patagonia might seem a complicated destination to reach, but a **reliable network of flights** from the two capitals, Santiago (Chile) and Buenos Aires (Argentina), to the main cities in Patagonia makes this a straightforward trip to organize. **Booking flights as far in advance as possible is essential**, while **buses and car rental** are transport options ideal for those with a longer vacation period and who are happy to travel at a more leisurely pace.

Flights to Patagonia

Chile

Visitors to Chile will normally fly into **Comodoro Arturo Merino Benítez International Airport** (Santiago International Airport, SCL) 9-miles (15 km) north-west of the capital city.

American Airlines, Delta Airlines and LATAM have direct flights to Santiago from New York (one daily), Miami (two to three daily), Dallas (one daily), and Atlanta (two daily). **Qantas, Iberia, Alitalia, Air France, Air Canada** and from January, **British Airways**, also fly directly from Sydney, Madrid, Rome, Paris, Toronto and London Heathrow.

Argentina

Most visitors flying from outside of South America land into **Ministro Pistarini International Airport** (Ezeiza International Airport, EZE) 14-miles (22 km) outside of Buenos Aires.

Direct flights to Buenos Aires arrive from New York (one daily), Miami (one to two daily), Dallas (one daily) and Atlanta (one daily). **British Airways, Lufthansa, Iberia, Air France, Alitalia, KLM , Air New Zealand and Turkish** fly from London Heathrow, Frankfurt, Madrid, Paris, Rome, Amsterdam, Auckland and Istanbul.

Internal Flights within Patagonia

LATAM and [Sky Airline](#) are the carriers that fly internally between Santiago and Chilean Patagonia. In Argentina, [Aerolíneas Argentinas](#), [LATAM](#) and [Líneas Aéreas del Estado](#) are the main domestic carriers.

	Destination	Flights daily
Chile Santiago International Airport	Punta Arenas (PUQ) Puerto Montt (PMC)	2+ daily 8+ daily
Argentina Ezeiza International Airport	Rio Gallegos (RGL) Ushuaia (USH) El Calafate (FTE) Bariloche (BRC)	3+ daily 5+ daily 3+ daily 11+ daily

Bus travel in Patagonia

For those on a smaller budget or with more time to travel, buses are **an easy and surprisingly comfortable form of transport in Patagonia**. If you're hoping to journey between towns and cities in Patagonia, or cross the border into the neighboring country, buses are the easiest method.

Companies vary by region, but the more expensive outfits universally offer **modern, Brazilian-built coaches** that are designed for long-distance travel. **Hot meals and snacks** are served on longer journeys and **coche cama** (a seat that reclines 160° or even 180° degrees in some cases) is a more expensive, but strongly recommended, investment. For overnight journeys, these seats provide a significantly **higher level of comfort and legroom**.

During high season or public holidays, it is recommended to **buy bus tickets at least a few days in advance**. Out of season, bus tickets can normally be bought on the day of travel. It is possible to buy them online, although **tourist agencies can often arrange bus transport** for a nominal fee or tickets can be bought directly from **kiosks in the main bus terminal** of each city and town.

Argentina

Travelling through Argentina by bus is made easier by the two main highways that run the length of Argentine Patagonia.

Ruta Nacional 3: this highway passes along the Atlantic coast from Buenos Aires, through **Puerto Madryn, Trelew and Río Gallegos**. From here, it crosses the Strait of Magellan via ferry to reach the **Tierra del Fuego archipelago and Río Grande**, before terminating in Ushuaia.

Ruta Nacional 40: this road skirts the Andes down the eastern edge of Argentina, passing through **Bariloche, Esquel and close to El Calafate and El Chaltén**. Before reaching Río Gallegos, it also travels near to **Puerto Natales** on the Chilean side - the main gateway to **Torres del Paine National Park**.

For each highway, **buses depart on a regular basis** and stop at all main towns and cities, making it easy to hop between the different parts of Patagonia. Pricing varies depending upon the length of the journey, but a single **from Buenos Aires to Bariloche costs from \$130 for a cama seat**.

Chile

On the Chilean side, there is one main highway that allows visitors to easily traverse the Patagonian countryside.

The Carretera Austral or Ruta 7: starting in **Puerto Montt** on the very edge of Chilean Patagonia, this road meanders through **Chaitén, Puyuhuapi, Coyhaique, Puerto Río Tranquillo, and Cochrane**, before terminating in **Villa O'Higgins**. To travel further south, buses from Cochrane cross the border into Argentina and join the Ruta Nacional 40 which follows the other shore of the Cochrane Lake. Again, prices vary between region, but a bus from Puerto Montt to Coyhaique starts at **\$57 single for a cama seat**. Ferry connections are also required at various points to cross expanses of water along the route and may need to be **booked in advance during peak season**.



Buses can get you all the way to Ushuaia, the world's southernmost city.

Car rental in Patagonia

Another comfortable and practical method of travel in Patagonia is to **hire a car**. International companies such as [Hertz](#), [Avis](#), [Europcar](#), and [Budget](#) operate in Patagonia, as well as local rental companies. It's worth planning a round-trip to drop off the vehicle at the same pick-up point as this can save you a lot of money. A **14-day round-trip car rental** from **Santiago International Airport starts at \$480** and from **Ezeiza International Airport in Buenos Aires, \$760**.

Self-hire is the best way to access **Patagonia's more rural locations**, but drivers should be aware that few of the roads here are paved and they can become muddy and even unpassable following heavy rainfall. **4WDs are not essential**, but can be useful in mountainous areas or where there is snow.

As with all forms of transport, **booking early during the summer season is necessary** to ensure a vehicle is available. Crossing between Chile and Argentina requires certain paperwork which can normally be acquired through the rental company and being in possession of **an international driving license** when driving in Chile is recommended as a way of speeding up any dealings with the carabineros (police).

Ferry and Boat Travel in Patagonia

Another method of travelling in Patagonia is via **a ferry or a cruise ship**. From Puerto Montt in the north of Chilean Patagonia, four-day ferry journeys travel through the inlets and channels of the Chilean fjords to arrive at **Puerto Chacabuco and Puerto Natales**.

Australis cruise ship stopping at one of the many glaciers of Glacier Alley in the Chilean fjords.



Ferries from **Quellón** on Chiloé Island **to Chaitén**, near the top of the Carretera Austral, navigate through the fjords to Puerto Cisnes and Puerto Chacabuco, one or two times per week depending upon the season. Wildlife such as **dolphins, seals, penguins and whales** can be spotted from these boats and in good weather you can expect excellent views of the volcanoes and parks which line the Pacific coast. Prices start at **\$26 per person for a single trip**.

International cruises start from Punta Arenas in Chile or Ushuaia in Argentina and travel through the untouched wilderness of the southernmost Chilean fjords to penguin colonies and isolated glaciers. Visit the Australis website for more information regarding these cruises.

5. Travel Essentials for a Comfortable Patagonian Holiday

Visas

- › Citizens of **most European countries, Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand** do not require visas for **a stay of up to 90 days**. If planning on travelling in one country for longer than three months, your visa can be easily renewed by “border-hopping” into neighboring Chile or Argentina and re-entering the country. This grants another 90 day stay, without charge.
- › To enter Chile, citizens of **Albania, Australia (if entering through Santiago International Airport) and Mexico** must pay a reciprocity fee upon arrival into the country.
- › To enter Argentina, **citizens of Australia and Canada** must pay a reciprocity fee online prior to arrival in the country. The reciprocity fee for **citizens of the United States** has recently been waived until further notice, but it is still worth referring to the latest notices from the Argentine immigration website before arriving into the country.

Money

- › In Patagonia, the local currencies are **the Chilean Peso and Argentine Peso**.
- › Be aware that outside of the main cities in the region **ATMs are limited** and will sometimes **not accept foreign credit cards**. Taking out money from cash machines in larger cities can save a lot of hassle during your journey.
- › You may receive a **5% discount in stores and on touers if you pay in cash**.

- › In national parks such as Torres del Paine you will not find cash machines or be able to pay by card. For Torres del Paine, ensure you **withdraw enough money in Puerto Natales** for your entire stay within the park.
- › **Mastercard and Visa** are the most widely accepted credit cards. **Diners Club and American Express** are becoming more universally accepted.
- › **Travelers' checks** can also be cashed in both Chile and Argentina.

Clothing

- › **Layers**, including a range of sweaters, jackets, fleeces, t-shirts and long-sleeved shirts, and **undergarments made of synthetic fibers**, are best for the changeable climate of Patagonia.
- › **Thermal underwear** is recommended for cold nights, particularly in mountain regions or the far south.
- › **A waterproof raincoat or parka** is essential for protection against the fierce winds and heavy rains that are experienced throughout Patagonia. **Waterproof overtrousers** will keep you dry and warm during particularly rainy and windy weather and **waterproof gloves** are also strongly recommended.
- › A firm pair of **waterproof trekking or hiking boots**, particularly ones which provide robust ankle and heel protection, will be best suited to the range of Patagonian terrain.
- › **A hat** that protects your neck and ears, **UV protection sunglasses** and **high-factor sunblock** are indispensable for offering sun protection.

Other Accessories

- › **A daypack with waterproof cover** is also ideal if you are planning on hiking. Those which include an adjustable waist belt will help to manage the weight of the load on your back and make it more comfortable for trekking.
- › **Binoculars** for wildlife spotting.
- › **A camera with a good zoom lens** for taking photographs of wildlife from a distance.



Sturdy hiking boots are essential for making the most of Patagonia's hiking trails.



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