

The Towers of Paine & Chilean Patagonia

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Depart London

Depart from London for the overnight flight to Santiago, the capital of Chile.

DAY 2 Arrive Santiago

Arrive into Santiago and transfer to our central hotel with the afternoon free for relaxation and local sightseeing.

DAY 3 Fly to Punta Arenas - Otway Sound Penguin Colony Visit

In the morning we return to the airport for our domestic flight south to Punta Arenas. On arrival we have lunch, after which we will visit the famous Penguin colony at Otway Sound to see the Magellanic Penguins. More than 5000 pairs of Magellanic penguins make this spot of shoreline on the Strait of Magellan their home. They live in small burrows in the ground where they raise their young. The penguins can be seen marching back and forth from their burrows and the sea where they search for food. After the visit we continue northwards to our hotel in the small fishing town of Puerto Natales.

DAY 4 Transfer to Torres del Paine National Park

The morning will be free to explore Puerto Natales at leisure. After lunch we board our private vehicle and make the 3 hour drive to the Paine National Park. We camp at Las Torres at the entrance to the Park. Being so far south it stays light until very late so if the weather is good we should get some fantastic evening views of the Paine massif.

DAY 5 Hike to the Towers of Paine

A day hike up into Valle Ascencio to the foot of the celebrated Towers of Paine. These spectacular granite spires are a magnet for rock climbers from all over the world. The tallest of these towers, the Central Tower of Paine, was first climbed in 1963 by Don Whillans and Chris Bonington. We can have a picnic lunch by the new refuge at the foot of the towers and in the afternoon we return to our campsite by refuge Las Torres.

DAY 6 Trek to Los Cuernos Mountain Refuge

From Las Torres we hike around the north shore of the lake to the mountain refuge of Los Cuernos, situated in a beautiful location at the foot of the Cuernos (horns) of Paine and at the entrance to the French Valley. We will take local porters who will carry all our heavy baggage, allowing us to hike with just a light day pack.

DAY 7 Explore the French Valley

In the morning our porters will depart with our heavy luggage to this evening's accommodation at Refuge Pehoe. Our day hike days us into the spectacular French Valley. We cross the French River on a foot bridge and follow a steep trail along the narrow gorge. Our route takes us through forests

on the southeastern slopes of Cerro Paine Grande (the highest peak in the Park at 3050m) and crosses a few small streams. As we gain altitude, we scramble through rocky sections of the mountain's moraine slopes to a breathtaking lookout point. On a clear day, we have fantastic views of the high peaks that surround us from this extraordinarily beautiful cirque. The Cuernos or Horns of Paine (2600m), as well as the Mascara (2300m) and Espada spires (2500m) are among them. We can marvel at the geology of these incredible rock formations as we watch small avalanches thunder down Cerro Paine's rock and ice face.

DAY 8 Hike to Glacier Grey

This morning we hike to Lake Grey for a panoramic view of its four-mile-wide glacier. Crossing a dry, shallow valley, we contour around the lower slopes of Cerro Paine Grande watching for soaring condors along the way. Our trail passes a small, secluded lake before reaching a ridge with fabulous views of Lake Grey and the massive Glacier Grey. Turquoise-colored icebergs may be floating in the waters, blown to the opposite end of the lake by strong winds, and with luck, we may witness the glacier calving as large pillars of ice crack off and crash into the waters below with a thunderous roar. Views of Cerro Zapata, (1530m) as well as several sparkling waterfalls cascading down the mountainsides add even more drama to the surrounding landscape. Glacier Grey is one of three glaciers in the park that originate at the Continental Ice Cap, visible on a clear day as a huge white mass on the horizon. Trip members interested in getting even closer to the glacier can continue further along our trail and get close-up views of its ice walls and caves. We stay overnight at the mountain refuge located here.

DAY 9 Boat Transfer - Travel to Puerto Natales

From Refuge Grey we transfer by motor launch along Lake Grey to meet with our vehicle transportation which will be waiting to take us back to Puerto Natales and our hotel. Hot showers await! In the evening we will be able to eat out in one of the town's restaurants where local seafood, especially King Crab, is a speciality.

DAY 10 Depart Punta Arenas

In the morning we transfer to Punta Arenas for the flight back home, changing aircraft in Santiago.

DAY 11 Arrive London

Arrival into London in the morning.