



## Condor - Patagonia

**Multi-day 'W' hike in Torres del Paine National Park • Sea kayak Eberhard Fjord  
Visit Otway Sound penguin colony • Hike to the base of Monte Fitz Roy and Cerro Torre  
• Boat cruise to Grey Glacier • Perito Moreno Glacier • Hike Los Glaciares National  
Park • Bike Rio de las Vueltas and Lago Argentino**

**14 days: Punta Arenas – Punta Arenas**

**Fare: US\$3999**

**Season: November – March**

*Patagonia, put simply, is the hiking capital of the world... Immense craggy mountain ranges erupt straight up from colossal boulder fields, vast rivers of ice calve into deep blue lakes, and its intricate coastline is strewn with uncharted fjords and inlets. It's the type of scenery that leaves an indelible impression in your memory – one that photos will never quite manage to replicate. On the Condor you'll visit some of the most amazing places on Earth, by foot, kayak, bike and boat. You'll enjoy incredible views as you hike in the Fitzroy area of Argentina, trek in Chile's Torres del Paine National Park, cycle by a sinuous river outside charming El Chalten and sea kayak a breathtaking fjord. You'll need to be in reasonable shape for this trip, but there's no need to be a super athlete. This is a trip for real people with a passion for the outdoors. If you enjoy hiking through amazing scenery, the Condor is the trip for you!*

*Sunday*

### **Arrive Punta Arenas, Patagonia**

Welcome to Chilean Patagonia! The windswept plains of this southern region stretch on for miles, joining Chile's rugged coastline and majestic mountain peaks into one of the world's most awe-inspiring mountain environments, perched on the edges of the icy isthmus and fjords of the southern Pacific Ocean. Your trip starts in Punta Arenas where we'll pick you up and head directly to Puerto Natales located near the edge of Torres Del Paine National Park. In order to get into the most spectacular places right away, we get much of the driving for the first half of the trip out of the way on day one. If you'd prefer to skip the first day's driving, you can fly into Puerto Natales and we'll pick you up there.

**ACCOMMODATION:** *Family-run hostel, Puerto Natales*

*(D)*

*Monday*

### **Sea kayak Eberhard Fjord**

We're straight into it today with an amazing sea kayaking trip on Eberhard Fjord. This area was colonised in the late 19th century by Captain Eberhard as a cattle raising region, and historical buildings and *estancias* (traditional Chilean farms) still dot the shoreline. After a full safety briefing, we'll paddle out along the world's most southern continental peninsula, enjoying views of the rolling farmland and snowy peaks that line the fjord before stopping at a local shearing house for lunch and a chat with the locals. After lunch we'll head back to Puerto Bories, or if the weather allows we can paddle further along the coastline towards Puerto Natales. This region is known for its marine birdlife and native black neck swans, so we'll keep our eyes peeled for them as we paddle back to shore.

**ACCOMMODATION:** *Family-run hostel, Puerto Natales*

*(B,L,D)*

*Tuesday*

### **Start 'W' hike, Torres del Paine National Park**

Today we'll begin the legendary four-day 'W' hike, an amazing trek past sheer granite peaks, snow-clad mountains, glacial lakes and thick Magellanic forest. We'll follow the Rio Acensio Valley as it winds its way up to the crown jewel of the national park – Torres del Paine itself – one of the most famous mountain landscapes in the world. As we reach the top of the boulder field near the end of our hike, we'll come face to face with Cerro Grande – believed to be the tallest mountain in this range – rising 3,000 vertical feet and casting an immense reflection on the beautiful green alpine lake at its base. Tonight we'll stay in a cosy *refugio* (mountain lodge) with beds and mattresses supplied.

**ACCOMMODATION:** *Mountain refugio, Torres del Paine National Park*

*(B,L,D)*

Wednesday

### **Hike to Los Cuernos, Torres del Paine National Park**

It's an easier hike today, as we contour around the northern shore of Lake Nordenskjold, a glacial lake in the heart of the national park. As we head around the lake, we'll start to see glimpses of Los Cuernos – Spanish for 'the Horns' – three fantastically sculpted grey and white sedimentary peaks rising 800 vertical feet. The intense turquoise hue of the lake and starkness of the mountains make for spectacular photo opportunities. This evening we'll stay in the shadow of the mountains in Los Cuernos refugio.

ACCOMMODATION: *Mountain refugio, Torres del Paine National Park*

(B,L,D)

Thursday

### **Hike French Valley, Torres del Paine National Park**

We'll rise with the sun this morning to begin our hike up French Valley for a closer look at Los Cuernos. This ravine is probably one of the most beautiful places you'll ever see – over 4,000 feet deep with multiple glaciers cascading down its steep sides, creating a patchwork of ice and rock. The track steepens as we ascend a ridgeline to the upper French Valley past waterfalls and mountain tarns. At the top, we'll have incredible views of a massive natural amphitheatre, filled with the awesome French Glacier, the Paine Massif and Cuernos granite towers. This afternoon after an unforgettable day's hiking we'll walk to comfortable Paine Grande lodge for our last evening on the track.

ACCOMMODATION: *Paine Grande lodge, Torres Del Paine National Park*

(B,L,D)

**Phil says:** *“Torres del Paine is one of my absolute favourite places in the world. It has a fantastic mountain lodge system where you'll have the chance to share your night's stay with people from all around the globe, and enjoy the best views in the world – hands down. These refugios aren't the Ritz – but they're the real deal, Chilean style!”*

Friday

### **Hike to Grey Lake, scenic boat ride to Grey Glacier**

We'll hike along Grey Lake to Grey Glacier, a 650 foot (200m) high wall of ice that forms the northern end of the lake. This is one of the largest calving glaciers in the world, sending huge shards of ice – some as big as houses – plummeting into the lake's murky depths. We'll be met by a boat on the edge of the lake that will take us even closer to the glacier to explore the icebergs at its base. When we return from our boat trip, we'll head back to Puerto Natales, where we started our hike four days ago, for a well earned rest and another tasty meal!

ACCOMMODATION: *Family-run hostel, Puerto Natales*

(B,L,D)

Saturday

### **Travel to El Calafate**

Welcome to Argentina! Today we'll head over the border to the home of Tango, Evita Peron and Maradona. We'll journey north to El Calafate and Los Glaciares National Park, the greatest single remaining tract of wilderness in South America. It's also one of the most diverse – in addition to the vast mountain ranges and glaciers, it's home to forests of *guindo*, *lenga* (a type of beech tree) and *ñirre* scrub, as well as a multitude of lakes and rivers. We'll arrive in El Calafate in the afternoon, so you'll have the rest of the day to chill out on the shores of Lago Argentino, South America's third largest lake, with a surface area of over 1600 square kms (617 square miles). You can relax and enjoy your surroundings, or you can head off on one of the many hikes in the area. A particular favourite of ours is the short walk to Laguna Nimes, a renowned bird sanctuary where geese, ducks and flamingos make their home.

ACCOMMODATION: *El Calafate lodgings*

(B,L,D)

Sunday

### **Visit Perito Moreno Glacier**

If you thought the glaciers in Chile were amazing, today will take your breath away. We'll get right up close to the base of Perito Moreno Glacier to watch blocks of ice crack off the glacier's 180-foot-high terminal face and fall into the pastel-blue waters of Lago Argentino. This icefield is part of the world's third largest reserve of fresh water and forms a natural dam to the opposite shore that separates the two halves of Lago Argentino. With no escape route, the water level on the southern side of the lake can rise by up to 90 feet above the level of the main lake. An option today, if you want to get really close to the glacier, is to strap on crampons, pick up an ice axe, and take to the ice! Led by specialist glacier guides, you'll hike through the ice formations of the glacier, checking out its crevasses, seracs, tunnels and glacial

lagoons. The constant movement of the glacier means every day is different, so your guides will cut a path in the ice and make sure you make the most of the conditions. No previous experience is required – just let your guide know when you arrive in El Calafate if you're interested in ice hiking and they'll be happy to organise it for you. (Ice hiking additional US\$265 approx.)

ACCOMMODATION: *El Calafate lodgings*

(B,L,D)

**Phil says:** “If you look up ‘spectacular glacier’ in the dictionary, you’ll find Perito Moreno. Words simply cannot express its majesty – all the superlatives in the world can’t do justice to Patagonia’s alpine scenery, and in my book, Perito Moreno is the most awe-inspiring sight of them all.”

Monday

### **Travel to El Chalten, hike Mirador Laguna Torre**

El Chalten is a charming and remote mountain village, known for its amazing hiking and mountaineering opportunities that quite literally begin on your doorstep. From the heart of this rapidly-growing outdoor enthusiast’s paradise, you can see the tips of Fitz Roy and Cerro Torre peaks, as well as the lovely Rio de las Vueltas winding its way past town. We’ll hike through Patagonian drylands and windswept boulder fields to Mirador Laguna Torre (Spanish for ‘Tower Lagoon Lookout’) for heart-stopping views up the Fitz Roy valley to Cerro Torre, a spectacular granite spire looming over a sprawling mass of ice. Today is a relatively relaxing day, in preparation for tomorrow’s big hike into the heart of Los Glaciares National Park!

ACCOMMODATION: *Comfortable lodgings, El Chalten*

(B,L,D)

Tuesday

### **Hike to Laguna de los Tres**

We have a long day’s hike today, but the scenery is well worth the effort. A steady climb from El Chalten quickly rewards us with gorgeous birds-eye views of Rio de las Vueltas. Further on we’ll take a short side trip to Laguna Capri, a charming alpine lake, before continuing to Campamento Poincenot. From here we can look directly up to the towering Monte Fitz Roy. You’ll find it hard to imagine that the views of the brooding Fitz Roy massif could get any better, and many choose to wait here while keener hikers make the steep climb up to Laguna de Los Tres, at the very foot of the glacier itself. All of a sudden, if you’ve chosen to go on ahead, you’ll reach the crest and be greeted by stunning close-up views of Monte Fitz Roy looming a staggering 2000 metres above a glacial lake. Today is a real highlight and the views are amazing, no matter how far you get!

ACCOMMODATION: *Comfortable lodgings, El Chalten*

(B,L,D)

Wednesday

### **Hike Lomo del Pliegue Tumbado**

Today’s hike will give us a new appreciation of how incredibly huge and beautiful the steep peaks of Southern Patagonia are. We’ll begin our hike on the Lomo del Pliegue trail bright and early, embarking on a 3000-foot hike to the top of the rounded *Lomo* (hill!), passing first through the quiet Patagonian beech forest before ascending onto the wide plateau where the views start to become seriously beautiful. Upon reaching the summit, we’ll be greeted by one of the most incredible sights you’re ever likely to see – the towering peak of the Cerro Fitz Roy rising straight up above the Torre Glacier and Laguna Torre. There’s no need for a zoom lens to capture the finer features of this site as we’re up as close as you can get! Later, we’ll descend the trail back down to El Chalten and head onwards to El Calafate where over dinner, we’ll celebrate one of the best hikes you can do anywhere in the world.

ACCOMMODATION: *Comfortable lodgings, El Calafate*

(B,L,D)

Thursday

### **Free time in El Calafate, Cycling Lago Argentino**

This morning we’ll have the morning free to relax in El Calafate, with its cosmopolitan atmosphere, gorgeous sidewalk cafes and homemade chocolate shops in their own log cabins in the middle of town! If you’d prefer, we’ll have the chance to take to our bikes today for a ride along the shores of Lago and explore more of El Calafate’s scenic back roads. Set behind Lago Argentino is a stunning background of rust-colored mountains against an often cloudless sky. It’s cycling at its most sublime, but we’ll have to keep our eyes on the road at least some of the time! This afternoon we’ll

head back across the border to Chile where we'll spend the night in Puerto Natales.

ACCOMMODATION: *Puerto Natales Lodgings*

(B,L,D)

Friday

### **Hike Otway Sound penguin colony**

After a short drive through the Patagonian wilderness, we'll arrive at Otway Sound and hike to the penguin colony found at the edge of the Sound. The views of Tierra del Fuego provide a perfect backdrop as we watch the crudely – but not inappropriately – named “Jackass” Penguins congregate in their masses. These curious creatures migrate to Otway Sound every year to give birth and raise their young. Later we'll continue our journey through this amazing landscape to Punta Arenas where we began our journey.

ACCOMMODATION: *Punta Arenas Lodgings*

(B,L,D)

Saturday

### **Depart for home**

This is the last day of your Condor trip. You'll go home with rosy cheeks after kayaking, biking and hiking your way around one of the most spectacular alpine regions on Earth. Your guide will arrange transport to the airport for you if you're flying out today and if you're staying on, we can help you arrange extra hotel accommodation. (B)

## **Important Information**

**ACCOMMODATION:** The *Condor* is an active adventure-oriented trip around Patagonia. We've chosen accommodations for their comfort, cleanliness and charm – not the number of channels available on the television! In some of our accommodations on this trip, you will be sharing bathroom facilities. For our 4-day/3-night Torres del Paine trek, we're in backcountry refugios (basic mountain lodges) with minimal facilities but in stunning locations; the rest of the time we stay in clean, comfortable, locally-owned places in the heart of the action, which is where you want to be!

**RECOMMENDED FLIGHTS:** You can fly into Punta Arenas on the first day of the trip - be sure to arrive by 1pm. Punta Arenas is the main gateway town to Chilean Patagonia and major airline LAN flies into here. On the last day of your trip you can fly out at any time. If you want to arrive earlier or leave later, we're happy to help out with extra hotel accommodation.

**TRIP START:** If you arrive on the first day of the trip, an ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA representative will meet you at the airport at 1.30pm. If you're already in Punta Arenas you'll meet your trip leader and the rest of your group in town at 2pm.

**TRIP END:** You'll wake up in Punta Arenas on the last day of your trip, so you can book a flight home departing any time that day – we'll be happy to drop you off at the airport any time before noon.

**TRANSPORT:** We cover a lot of ground in the *Condor* trip, and inevitably there are some travel days. The longest scheduled travel day is five hours, so there's always time to fit in an activity, which of course we do! We use Chile and Argentina's comfortable, reliable public transport system to get from town to town, and we have private vehicles and appropriate support where required for activities.

**FITNESS:** You must have a reasonable level of fitness to enjoy yourself. You don't have to be young or extremely fit (although if you are, you won't be bored) but you should be in the habit of doing some regular aerobic exercise. Age and experience are not important. An older person with a good attitude will enjoy themselves more than a 22-year-old couch potato! On the 4-day/3-night 'W' hike in Torres del Paine, you'll need to carry your own backpack (approx 60-70L), sleeping bag, overnight gear and toiletries as we are staying in mountain refugios (beds and mattresses are provided).

**EXPERIENCE:** You don't have to have any outdoor experience to do one of our trips. We offer trips that enable you to make the most of South America's awesome outdoor environment, culture and history. Our trip leaders are highly trained and experienced outdoor guides, and they'll look after you! You don't need any experience for the multi-day trek, or to have ever paddled a kayak before. You don't need to be a serious cyclist to enjoy our rides either. If you'd rather hike or laze around, then you don't have to do any biking at all! If you're energetic and in reasonable shape you'll have a wonderful time. On the other hand, if you like a challenge then we will certainly give you one! We manage the level of commitment to suit your experience, and we have an impeccable safety record.

**FLEXIBILITY:** We won't tell you that everything in South America runs like clockwork. What we *can* tell you is that we are experienced adventure travel leaders, and we know how to keep things operating as smoothly as possible, even when conditions are challenging. That's why we're here! But you'll find your trip even more enjoyable if you remember to bring flexibility, an open mind and a sense of humour with you.

**INCLUDED:** The trip fare is US\$3999. The trip fare includes just about everything, specifically:

- All guiding services. We always have an experienced trip leader with every trip and will have a local guide on many of our excursions for extra local knowledge.
- All ground transportation.
- Comfortable accommodation for your entire trip. We can also organise pre- and post-trip accommodation for you if required.
- All your breakfasts, lunches and dinners.
- All drinking water. Alcohol and other drinks are not included – although we've been known to spring for a few drinks here and there!
- All sea kayaking, hiking and biking as described in the itinerary. None of the activities are compulsory, so if you prefer to sit some of them out, and just have a 'down day' hanging out with a book and a hammock, then that's fine by us. This is your vacation after all!
- Tips for local activity guides and drivers are covered by us.

**NOT INCLUDED:** This is your holiday, and we are serious about not nickel-and-diming you! You'll have a few drinks to cover, extra activities if you choose them, and you'll probably feel like tipping your guide at the end of a fabulous time, but you won't be pulling out your wallet every few minutes on your ACTIVE SOUTH AMERICA trip!

**We'll see you soon!**

*Itinerary valid through April 2010*