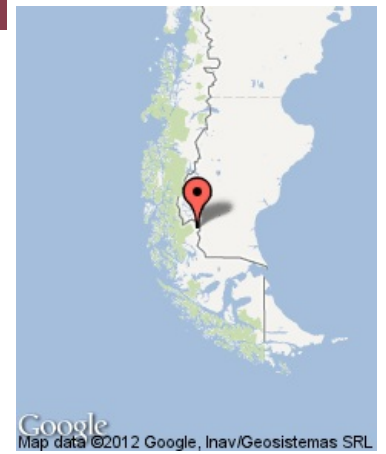


# Torres del Paine Trekking Expedition



## Highlights

Spend time exploring the great outdoors on this trekking holiday in the Torres del Paine National Park in Chile. Choose to stay five, seven or nine days and you'll have the chance to hike up into the heart of the Paine Massif, walk along the shores of Lake Pehoe and enjoy a boat ride to the blue face of the Grey Glacier.

The **Torres del Paine** National Park is a sprawling space that harbours mountains, glaciers, lakes and rivers within its clutches. Although it's a Chilean National Park, the place itself actually lies between the Patagonian Steppes and the Magellanic subpolar forests. In 1978, UNESCO granted it the title of World Biosphere Reserve. The whole area has been graced with more than its fair share of beauty, but it's the Torres del Paine massif itself that really stands out. These huge silver-grey spurs of rock jut upwards and, on clear days, frame magnificent cobalt-blue sky.

For sheer out-of-this-world scenery it's the boat trip to the blue face of the Grey Glacier that helps makes this tour so special – plus it's a chance to rest those legs after all that hiking you've been doing. It's a staggeringly beautiful icy-blue scene that sprawls for miles and can even be seen from space. Other highlights include: the trek up into the French Valley, which wends its way into the heart of the Paine Massif; and the most famous walk of all – the hike to the Torres base, where you'll be dwarfed by three towering granite monoliths.

## Is it for me?

The team that organises this tour grades it as 'demanding' so you'll need a decent level of fitness to enjoy it. You'll be spending lots of time walking, and the terrain is pretty tough going – especially when you head up to towards the Torres del Paine itself. You'll also be spending a lot of time in a small group (typically 8-12 travellers plus 2 guides) so it's best that you're happy travelling with others. Overall, this tour will really suit keen hikers, outdoors enthusiasts and anyone with buckets of stamina for long walks.

## Accommodation

Accommodation on this tour is a mix of eco camp lodge at the beginning and end of the tour and mountain refuge whilst on the trek. At the eco camp lodge you'll stay in standard domes which are kitted out in a modern, light-and-airy style – and don't look 'standard' at all. Standard domes have a 4m/12ft diameter vitrified wooden floor and a height of 2.1m/7ft allowing two persons to sleep and stand comfortably inside. They are resistant to the strongest Patagonian winds, rains, and snow, and come equipped with two single beds (doubles on request), fleece sheets, blankets, feather quilts and organic elements for decoration. Domes have a panoramic window and come coated with white canvas which allows plenty of sunlight inside. Coating considers an outer canvas layer and a thick insulation cushion to minimize the exchange of temperature. There are round windows in the ceiling to observe the stars before falling asleep. There are only 15 standard domes at the EcoCamp for up to approximately 30 people, to keep the numbers low.

EcoCamp's standard domes offer shared bathrooms for several environmental reasons: to collect waste in a central heated composting chamber, to minimize constructed areas and to have more control of water consumption and heating. There are showers with hot water. Accommodation in the standard domes are on a

Prices from

**1,436** GBP (7 days) per person

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sharing basis only. Single accommodation is only available if different gender single travellers are not willing to share.

The mountain refuges are somewhat more basic, but are perfectly adequate for a night's stay. They are typical mountain huts, open to anyone visiting Torres del Paine. Rooms are typically shared by 4-6 people. The beds are single, bunk type and you will be provided with a sleeping bag and a polar fleece liner (you don't need to bring a sleeping bag!). The bathrooms are also shared and they have hot water. The refugios are heated and have a very comfortable dining area. Food at the refugios can be rather simple, prepared for mountain people with low emphasis in flavour and presentation!

In terms of food, all of your meals are included from Day Two to Day Six (if you're on the seven-day tour) and lunch and dinner is provided on Day One, and breakfast and lunch on Day Seven. Expect hearty dishes that will keep your energy levels (and tummies) stocked up nicely.

## Itinerary

This trek can be done over five, seven or nine days. The week-long tour is the classic option and covers everything listed below. However, if time isn't on your side you can squeeze a fair amount into the five-day tour. You'll still get to see glaciers, lakes, forests and the Paine Towers but it'll be a bit easier on your legs. Alternatively, if you really want to splurge and see as much as possible, the nine-day tour will be for you. You'll get to trek the circuit of the Paine Massif – so it's for serious hikers only!

**PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS THE ITINERARY FOR THE 7 DAY W TREK. SEE BOOKING BOX FOR ALTERNATIVE ITINERARIES**

### Day 1 - Monday, the Patagonic Adventure Starts...

Torres del Paine National Park, Chile

The trip starts in Punta Arenas city during the morning either at your hotel or at the airport. From Punta Arenas you drive to Cascada EcoCamp located in the world-famous Torres del Paine National Park. During summer the sun sets around 11 pm, so as you drive in you'll have plenty of light to admire the Patagonian steppe with its guanaco and snow-peaked mountain horizon. Before arriving though, there are a couple stops. One is at Puerto Natales, a small but lively town on the shores of Seno Ultima Esperanza - "Last Hope Sound". You are invited to check out the town, leave any luggage you will not need for the trek in our office, and finally enjoy a hearty lunch with delicious local food. The other stop is at Cueva de Milodon, a massive prehistoric cave where the remains of a giant ground sloth were discovered in the 1890s. The surrounding area is very scenic with plenty of wild birds to be seen. The day ends with an overnight stay at the EcoCamp in Las Torres.

### Day 2 - Tuesday, Warming up in Los Cuernos

Torres del Paine National Park, Chile

You start your adventure in the park with a pleasant walk through the curly Cuernos trail located beside beautiful Lake Nordenskjold. During this 'appetizer walk' you'll take in the park's charming flora and fauna, its strong wind and the curious four-seasons weather that will accompany you for the next days. As you make your way along the trail you'll enjoy magnificent views of the park's central lakes and the Paine's Horns which crown the center of the Massif. You'll stop to get some great first shots of the park and also enjoy a delicious packed. The trek ends at Refugio Los Cuernos, a small and cozy mountain refuge by the shores of Lake Nordenskjold. The evening is left free to enjoy dinner and share experiences.

### Day 3 - Wednesday, Stepping into the Paine Massif's Heart: Valle Frances

Torres del Paine National Park, Chile

After breakfast, you'll begin a challenging trek to Valle Frances (French Valley), a steep trail that goes into the very heart of the Paine Massif. How deep you go depends on the groups' rhythm. An active walk leads you to the hanging bridge over the French River, at the foot of the south-east face of the Massif. From this point, you can enjoy your first truly wonderful view and then continue up the trail until reaching the upper prospects of the valley. The entire group of geological formations of the high valley can be admired here: Hoja (Blade), Máscara (Mask), Espada (Sword), Catedral (Cathedral), Aleta de Tiburón (Shark's Fin) and the magnificent Fortaleza (Fortress). Then it's time to have a picnic and recover from the walk. An optional trek to Mirador Britanico is available as well. Next, you'll descend through an undulating terrain of grassland and forest until you reach the Refugio Paine Grande, on the peaceful shores of Lake Pehoe. Finally, upon reaching the Refugio, the luggage is organized and there is time to talk about the day while you enjoy a replenishing dinner.

### Day 4 - Thursday, Torres del Paine's Big Daddy is on the Way: Glacier Grey!

Torres del Paine National Park, Chile

Today you'll hike from Paine Grande Lodge along the shores of mountain-lined Lake Pehoe to the northern end of glacial Lake Grey. You'll enjoy a picnic lunch before boarding the boat that sails to the blue face of Glacier Grey. You'll have lots of time to marvel at this calving glacier before the boat ride across Lake Grey with its floating pieces of ice. From Lake Grey's southern end you'll transfer to the EcoCamp. If the weather conditions do not allow you to navigate Lake Grey, you'll instead hike to Glacier Grey. Then at Pudeto you'll board the catamaran to cross Lake Pehoe. From there, you'll take a short drive back to Cascada EcoCamp.

### Day 5 - Friday, the Great Challenge: The Mighty Torres del Paine

Torres del Paine NP, Chile

Your goal today is to complete the most famous trekking trail in Torres del Paine National Park. You'll walk from the campsite towards Hostería Las Torres and connect with the winding uphill path to Ascencio Valley – the valley which supports the eastern face of the Towers' base. Dry mountain spots, beech forests and small rivers are passed along the scenic walk into the valley. It's not a difficult walk, but energy should nevertheless be saved for the final challenge: the moraine. This mass of boulders is the last guardian before your face-to-face meeting with the uplifting Torres del Paine. The moraine is sufficiently steep to consider doing it slowly and with an adequate amount of precaution. After a considerable effort, the Towers come into full view, rising majestically

before you with the glacial lake visible below. The famous Torres del Paine consists of three gigantic granite monoliths, the remains of a great cirque sheared away by the forces of glacial ice. After lunch, once everyone is ready, you'll backtrack along the same trail through Ascencio Valley, and return to the EcoCamp.

#### Day 6 - Saturday, Soft Day in the Eastern Lakes

Torres del Paine NP, Chile

You'll hike to the Laguna Azul lookout where you'll have a gorgeous view of both the lagoon and granite towers. Continue along the eastern side of Lago Sarmiento to the calcium formations on the lake's shores where guanacos are often seen. Later on, you'll trek to Paso Las Corneas with spectacular views of Rio Paine, Lake Pehoe and the massif of Paine. Depending on the group, you can also hike to the Toro lookout point that offers more soul-candy scenery - Lago Toro and the pampa, or steppe. Upon returning to the Ecocamp, you'll enjoy a farewell dinner.

#### Day 7 - Sunday, Adios Torres del Paine!

Punta Arenas, Chile

You board an early morning vehicle, sit back, relax, and enjoy a scenic ride back to Punta Arenas in time to catch the evening flight to Santiago.

## Details

### Getting there

The trip starts on Monday morning in Punta Arenas, last pick-up time: 12:30 pm at the airport.

The trip finishes on Sunday at Punta Arenas Airport at 4 pm or later depending on the group flight schedule. For domestic flights you have to be at the airport 1 hour before the flight leaves. Presidente Carlos Ibáñez del Campo International Airport is the nearest airport to Punta Arenas.

It is also possible to join or leave the trek from Punto Natales or Calafate (in Argentina) at no extra cost. The Calafate option does involve public buses, but all the stress of buying tickets and getting to and from the bus stations is taken care of for you

- The trip starts on the morning of day one in Calafate. You'll be picked up at your hotel in Calafate and taken to the bus terminal; where you board a public bus heading to Puerto Natales (tickets provided). You reach this town around 2 PM, from where you'll be transported to Torres del Paine and EcoCamp in time for dinner.

- Alternatively, you can leave on final day for Calafate. After breakfast the van that will transport you to Cerro Castillo (borderline) on time to catch the public bus going to Calafate. A transfer will take you from the bus station to your hotel in Calafate. Transfers to Calafate Airport have an additional cost. You will arrive at your hotel in Calafate at 2 PM

### Price includes

All ground transport; boat crossing over Lake Grey; 4 nights accommodation at EcoCamp in standard domes (shared basis); 1 night accommodation at Refugio Paine Grande and 1 night in Refugio Los Cuernos; sleeping bag for the refugios if needed; park fees for Cueva del Milodon and Torres del Paine National Park; one English speaking trekking guide; transport of your luggage within the Park; all meals except breakfast on Day One and dinner on Day Seven.

### Not included

Flight tickets; insurance; voluntary tipping and soft drinks or snacks

Price is for the 7 day W trek in high season and is per person based on 2 people sharing.

### When is best

The vast unbroken stretch of ocean to the west and south of the South American continent leaves the Patagonian Andes very exposed to the saturated winds that circle the Antarctic landmass. Also, both the strong marine and the South Patagonic Ice field influence make the weather hard to predict. In spring or early summer fine weather may deteriorate almost without warning, bringing rains and eventually snow. Even in summer (December to march) you should come prepared to find cold- strong winds (up to 130 km/hr) and rainfalls. The summer's average temperature is 11°C/52°F (24°Cmax, 2°C min).

### Comfort level

Reasonably comfortable (Inns, B&Bs, luxury camping etc.)

### Experience required

A reasonable level of fitness and interest is all that is needed

### Travellers should bring

We will send you a complete pre-trip info brochure once you book including things you need to bring in detail. In brief you will need; US\$ in cash for buying extra drinks/snacks or souvenirs in Torres del Paine NP, day backpack (20-30lt), duffel bag (70 liters), waterproof trekking boots, waterproof parka & pants, inner isolating layer (fleece or wool), three changes of clothes, sun hat, sun screen, hiking socks, sandals (for after hikes), bathing suit, sunglasses, towel (optional), ski poles (optional), long underwear, extra change of socks, flashlight/headlamp, extra insulating layer (fleece, wool, or expedition weight long underwear. **YOU DON'T HAVE TO BRING A SLEEPING BAG.**

## Reviews (1)

### Reviews of this experience

“ The actual trip, logistics, accomodation etc. worked really well! I didn't expect the Eco basecamp to be so luxurious. The sleeping domes were so cool, the bathroom facilities amazing as well as the whole restaurant and bar area. Almost like being at the Hilton but in the wilderness ;-). The cabins and dorms worked well too but after two days of long treks it felt great coming back to the Eco domes. A perfect balance. The guides were friendly and knowledgeable. I was lucky to end up with a great group that had a lovely dynamic which also contributed to the overall experience. I only have one little comment and it's not a biggie. In the eco camp I shared dome with another female (a fellow country woman from Sweden it just so happened). However the one night in cabins I had to share with a man in my group. It worked out ok but I guess I only expected to share with the same sex. Maybe something to prepare others with in the future.

In summary, I would highly recommend this trip to others it's one of the most awesome things I've ever done!

Thanks for all your help in the run up to my trip!

P.S. My boots also turned out amazingly well in the end ;-)

AnnBergstrom reviewing Torres del Paine Trekking Expedition