TREKKING IN THE PATAGONIAN ANDES

Vast and varied, Patagonia is muddy rainforest, wild rivers, glaciated peaks and the windblown steppe skating to some lost horizon. You can't deny its grandeur. It whispers possibility. Shared by Chile and Argentina, this remote region sits at the tip of the continent. It has been the opiate of great adventurers, those who attempt to climb its sheer towers, traverse the continental ice cap or, like writer Bruce Chatwin, simply lose themselves wandering its great expanse. Today, a number of outstanding parks and private reserves frame this two-thousand-kilometer stretch of Andean wilderness. The maps stoke our imagination. Patagonia still has hundreds of unnamed mountains, contours inaccessible and unexplored, stories frozen in their layers.

The truth is that in Patagonia much remains to be discovered. That mere notion should put the thud in your pulse. You can start with the world-renowned treks around Torres del Paine and the Fitz Roy range, but on dozens of others you are more likely to spot a condor than another human being. Patagonian trails can take you through pristine forests to the rim of glaciers, under granite monoliths and over rickety suspension bridges, well beyond the crowds. Its remoteness doesn't make it hard to travel. Though characteristically slow-paced, Patagonia is one of the safest destinations in South America.

Yet, since the Patagonian ethos is built on deep solitude and bullying weather, the going isn't always easy. But that's probably what hooked you in the first place.

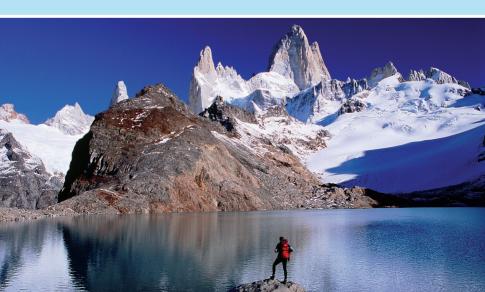


Table of Treks

ARAUCANÍA	DURATION	DIFFICULTY	TRANSPORT
LAGUNA TERMAL	61/2-81/4 HOURS	MODERATE	BUS
AROUND VOLCÁN ANTUCO	3 DAYS	MODERATE	BUS, WALK
LONQUIMAY CIRCUIT	6 DAYS	MODERATE-DEMANDING	BUS
HUERQUEHUE LAKES	4 DAYS	EASY-MODERATE	BUS
VILLARRICA TRAVERSE	6 DAYS	DEMANDING	TOUR OR TAXI; BUS
LAKES DISTRICT	DURATION	DIFFICULTY	TRANSPORT
ASCENT OF VOLCÁN LANÍN	3 DAYS	DEMANDING	BUS
TERMAS DE LAHUEN CO TO LA UNIÓN	2 DAYS	EASY	TOUR OR TAXI
BAÑOS DE CAULLE	4 DAYS	MODERATE	BUS
PAMPA FRUTILLA	2 DAYS	EASY-MODERATE	BUS
TERMAS DE CALLAO	3 DAYS	EASY	BUS, BOAT
NAHUEL HUAPI TRAVERSE	5 DAYS	MODERATE-DEMANDING	BUS
PASO DE LAS NUBES	2 DAYS	MODERATE	BUS, BOAT
LAGUNA FRÍA	2 DAYS	EASY-MODERATE	BUS & WALK
CENTRAL PATAGONIA	DURATION	DIFFICULTY	TRANSPORT
LAGUNA TRONADOR	21/2-31/2 HOURS	EASY-MODERATE	BUS OR TOUR
SENDERO ALERCES	30-40 MINUTES	EASY	BUS OR TOUR
CASCADAS ESCONDIDAS	11/2-2 HOURS	EASY	BUS OR TOUR
AROUND CERRO HIELO AZUL	3 DAYS	MODERATE	BUS OR TAXI
LAGO KRÜGGER	3 DAYS	MODERATE	BUS
AROUND CERRO CASTILLO	4–6 DAYS	MODERATE-DEMANDING	BUS
SOUTHERN PATAGONIA	DURATION	DIFFICULTY	TRANSPORT
CAMPAMENTO DE AGOSTINI	4 DAYS	EASY-MODERATE	BUS
LAGUNA TIGRE SUR	2 DAYS	MODERATE	TAXI
VALLE RÍO MOSCU	2 DAYS	EASY	BUS, PLANE
LAGUNA TORRE	2 DAYS	EASY	BUS
AROUND MONTE FITZ ROY	3 DAYS	EASY-MODERATE	BUS
TORRES DEL PAINE LOOKOUT	41/2-6 HOURS	EASY-MODERATE	BUS
PAINE CIRCUIT	8 DAYS	MODERATE-DEMANDING	BUS
PINGO-ZAPATA	2 DAYS	EASY	PRIVATE
TIERRA DEL FUEGO	DURATION	DIFFICULTY	TRANSPORT
SIERRA VALDIVIESO CIRCUIT	4 DAYS	DEMANDING	VAN OR TAXI
LAGUNA ESMERALDA	3–4 HOURS	EASY	VAN OR TAXI
GLACIAR VINCIGUERRA	5-61/2 HOURS RETURN	MODERATE	VAN OR TAXI
PASO DE LA OVEJA	2–3 DAYS	MODERATE	VAN, TAXI, BUS
DIENTES CIRCUIT	5 DAYS	MODERATE-DEMANDING	BOAT OR PLANE

BEST TIME	SUMMARY	PAGE
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DEC-APR	Circuit over a scenic col past a large lake dammed by lava	45
DEC-APR	Circumnavigation of a dormant volcano through a fascinating post-eruption landscape	50
NOV-APR	Exploration of a subalpine lake basin to some remote hot springs	57
DEC-MAR	Scenic high-level route along the rugged complex volcanic range	61
BEST TIME	SUMMARY	PAGE
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NOV-MAY	An uncomplicated trek to the scenic shores of Lago Paimún	85
DEC-APR	Popular trek to a thermal field with fumeroles, geysers and hot springs	89
NOV-APR	Gentle rise to tarns among rolling grassy alpine meadows	94
OCT-MAY	Laid back amble via hot springs with volcano views	97
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