



# CHILE: VOLCANOES & PATAGONIA



*This information should answer most of your questions about the trip and give you a better idea of what we do day to day. It doesn't hope to answer everything - if you need any further information please get in touch.*



*Paine National Park. Los Cuernos (the Horns) across Lake Pehoe*

- **A great itinerary for adventurous walkers**
- **Complete the 'W' circuit in Paine National Park, Patagonia**
- **Walking trails and volcano ascents around Chile's enchanting Lake District**
- **Climb two volcanoes, Lonquimay and Villarrica**
- **Cosy hosterias, lodges and chalets in Lake District.**
- **Supported camping with lodge meals (5 nights) in Patagonia**

*\*Hosteria – usually describes a small country hotel also providing food*

## **Chile**

Chile is that long thin country stretching from Peru southwards to Cape Horn along the western side of South America, between the Andes and the Pacific. It is incredibly over 4300 km long but averages only 180km in width. Its current population is around 17 million and its 760,000 square

km area encompasses more climates, landscapes and ways of life than any other country of its size. The terrain ranges from the high arid deserts of the north; the Mediterranean scenery of the heartland; lakes and volcanoes; amazingly dense temperate rainforest; a largely roadless area of glaciers, mountains and fiords leading to Patagonia and finally the sub-antarctic tundra of Cape Horn.

After the Pinochet dictatorship from 1974 to 1990, Chile has made a steady return to a stable democracy. Its strong economy still rests too much on copper (the world's largest producer) but without diversification this leaves many Chileans too far away from the benefits. In December 2013 socialist Michele Bachelet regained Presidency and there is a current popular wave of optimism that imbalances will be righted.

### **The Volcanoes and Patagonia trip**

Visiting a narrow country stretching for 4300 km demands sensible compromises - it is unrealistic or inadvisable to try and see it all - yet some do! Our popular 'Treks and Volcanoes' trip to Chile requires 3 domestic flights but has left plenty of good walking time and opportunities to absorb landscapes and cultures. After recovery time in stylish Santiago the adventure begins with a flight (almost 5 hrs) down to Punta Arenas, Chile's gateway to Antarctica. In our five days in the Torres del Paine National Park we climb up the Ascensio valley for a close view of the mighty 'Towers' and then continue with the classic 'W' route from east to west to finish close to Glacier Grey. We camp close to the Refugios where we take our meals. (Early bookers can reserve a dormitory bunk in the Refugios – see Accommodation below.)

Flying north now to Puerto Montt we hike trails in an enchanting landscape of mountains, lakes and forests made surreal by snowcapped volcanoes rising above the auracaria ('monkey puzzle') trees. The challenges continue with ascents of Lonquimay (2726m) and Villarrica (2847m). No camping here –we stay in attractive lodges, hosterias and chalets.

The ascent of both volcanoes will be energetic and exciting but not unduly difficult. We begin both ascents up ski access roads at around 1400m. Crampons and ice axes may be required for ascending the upper slopes of Villarrica, (these are provided) but the snow is usually soft, no technical climbing is involved and the skills are easily learned. Villarrica is the more active of the two providing not only a great view from the summit but also the spectacle of the volcano's magma-filled crater.

**Volcan Villarrica is open again!** *Volcan Villarrica erupted in March 2015 after which the mountain was closed for a long period and a 5km exclusion zone prevented access. In case of any renewed activity which is always possible – it remains active - nearby Volcan Quetrupillan (2360m) with its attractive wooded approach will be a fine alternative.*

Throughout the trip we will be accompanied by a Chilean guide who will bring the landscape to life with his or her knowledge and help us spot a range of animal, bird and plant life.

One or two of the walking days are long 7hrs+ but within the capabilities of any reasonably fit walker. As with many High Places trips there is a demand for stamina, good clothing and footwear and the ability to cope with bad weather should it arise. On the Paine 'W' you need to carry personal gear, sleeping bag and mat on 2 days only. Elsewhere you will only need to carry what you might use that day: i.e. rain gear, spare fleece, camera, snacks, water etc.

### **Weather**

Central and southern Chile has a temperate climate, with four distinct seasons geared to the southern summer with the warmest weather November to early April. In the Lake District and Auracania warm summer temperatures should be enjoyed. Patagonia can be warmer and colder and it is often windy. They say that if you stand still here "all four seasons will blow past you in a day - sometimes in an hour". Literally, expect anything! There can be hot days here too in the high

20's C. but equally we may experience rain and certainly wind - sometimes very strong. The ozone layer is badly depleted here so good sunglasses, sunhat and sunblock are required.

### **Accommodation**

In towns we stay in good hotels. While we are in Auracania and the Lake District we stay in attractive lodges and hosterias sometimes with shared bathrooms etc but being characterful is our main aim. A hosteria is usually a small guesthouse which also offers food/meals. We camp in Torres del Paine close by the Refugios where we take our meals (OR book early and stay in the Refuges - add US\$40pp per night, subject to availability)

### **Meals**

Except in the main towns all meals are provided. The quality is good and vegetarians are well catered for. On the hiking days a packed lunch is always provided. In the main towns we provide breakfast only, and on some travel days it is easier to buy your own lunch. Your leader will advise on eating in towns and may know the places of character where there are few tourists. A good three-course dinner may cost around US\$25 and lunch, US\$15 approx. See *day by day itinerary* for details of the meals you will need to buy. Whilst hiking and camping in Torres del Paine, dinner and breakfast are provided in the Refugios and a packed lunch is supplied.



*Beneath the Towers*

### **Flights and Transport**

There are three internal flights in Chile – Santiago to Punta Arenas at the start, Punta Arenas to Puerto Montt and Temuco back to Santiago. Buying these with your International ticket gives the best and sometimes bargain basement prices especially with the Chile Airline LATAM. We will advise which flights to buy. For transfers on the ground we use a combination of private and public, buses, taxis and minibuses.

### **Health and hygiene**

Generally standards are high in Chile and water is mainly safe to drink but caution whilst in the outdoors is always advisable and it is best to carry water-purifying agents. Boiled drinking water whilst camping will be available. But DO watch the seafood and with some hard-earned hindsight we would advise abstinence until well into the trip!

### **Safety**

Crime is not a major problem in Patagonia or Chile but care and common sense should always be exercised in major cities, towns and airports.

### **Language**

A few words of Spanish will make your trip far more enjoyable, as everyone appreciates the effort made in trying to speak their language. Those working in the tourist trade and many younger people are likely to speak some English.

## DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

*This itinerary is flexible and should be seen as a guide only. Local conditions, weather or fitness could lead to changes in our daily plans. All times and distances are approximate. 'B,L,D' refers to meals included in the trip cost, i.e. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner.*

**This trip is 17 days arriving in PUNTA ARENAS and departing from SANTIAGO. The first and last days refer to the days of arrival and departure, and may not be the days you leave or return home.**

### DAY 1 PUNTA ARENAS

A 4-5 hour flight from Santiago - Chile is a looonnnggg country! – Punta Arenas is Chile's principal town in Patagonia and its gateway to Antarctica. Time to stop travelling. Transfer to our hotel.

### DAY 2 PUERTO NATALES

A 3 hour ride to the small town of Puerto Natales on the shores of Seño Ultima Esperanza (Last Hope Sound). There may be an option in the season to visit the Otway Penguin Colony en-route. Puerto Natales is an interesting traditional settlement and being the gateway town to Torres del Paine there are always other hikers and backpackers around. Time to recover from the journey and pack for the trek. Hotel. (B)

### DAY 3 LAS TORRES DEL PAINE NATIONAL PARK - LAS TORRES CAMP

Today there is an added sense of anticipation, as the jagged skyline of Las Torres del Paine mountains appears on the horizon. A good half day walk reaches a fine viewpoint of the mountains as well as providing a chance to see some of the Paine wildlife, the delicate guanaco (small alpaca-type camelid), the fox, and also likely the rhea (Patagonian ostrich) and flamingos – and there are Condors here! Camp/refugio at Las Torres. (B,L,D)



*Las Torres*

### DAY 4 LAS TORRES DEL PAINE (THE TOWERS) - LAS TORRES CAMP

We cross the Ascencio River by a small suspension bridge and continue walking up the valley to the base of the towers. Steadily uphill for most of the way until the wooded trail steepens even more to finally reach the lip of the upper valley. A spectacular place with a glacial lake nestling below the sheer granite 'Towers of Paine', rising over a kilometre above us. The first epic ascent of the central tower in 1962 by the English climbers Bonington and Whillans was a landmark in world climbing. Camp/refugio Las Torres. 7 hours. (B,L,D)

DAY 5 LOS CUERNOS

Making our way more easily along the open slopes above the shore of Lago Nordenskjöld we head for the second prong in the 'W' the Valle Frances. There are fine views all the way as we traverse around the lake and enter beech forest where the Refugio Los Cuernos settlement and campsite nestles bravely in a rocky and wooded mountain landscape. 4-5hours. (B,L,D)

DAY 6 VALLE FRANCÉS – PAINE GRANDE CAMP

A dramatic day hiking up the wild Valle Frances dominated by the hanging glaciers of the vast east face of Paine Grande and to our right the Los Cuernos (the horns) skyline. First we continue along the main valley until we reach the peaceful Campamento Italiano, (the backpackers campsite) set among the trees at the junction with the Rio del Frances. The Valle Frances ascent scrambles up a rocky moraine ridge passing several waterfalls to the first great viewpoint – the Mirador Frances. The trail continues more easily into the upper cirque and finally the Campamento Britannico. A short way above this campsite there are great views across to Paine Grande, Los Cuernos (the Horns) and the Aleta del Tiburon (Shark's Fin). Back down we continue westward to reach after approx 2 hours, Paine Grande campsite and the new Refugio. 7-8 hours. For the first time we will see the significant damage from the 2011 great fire\*\* which not surprisingly doesn't feature highly in brochures or park publicity! (B,L,D)

*\*\*In Dec 2011 a large area of the Park around Paine Grande and the shores of Lake Pehoe and Skottsberg was devastated by a huge fire accidentally started by a careless tourist. In the blaze, fanned by strong winds and dry conditions some 120sq miles of forest and scrub were burnt to the ground. There have been several fires in recent years but none as big as 2011. The land will take many years to recover. It is the reason we now begin the 'W' at the east and not at this end.*



*Los Cuernos – compare with intro photo! Photo Shawntel Stapleton*

DAY 7 GLACIER GREY – PAINE GRANDE CAMP

A steady ascent up the Grey Valley traverses the lower slopes of Paine Grande, the highest mountain in the National Park. Glacier Grey is an offshoot of the immense Southern Patagonian Icecap and from a dramatic viewpoint, we can watch the icebergs and perhaps see them calving and crashing into the lake. We drop back down to our camp and dinner at the Paine Grande Refugio. 7 hours. (B,L,D)

DAY 8 PUERTO NATALES

After breakfast, we cross Lago Pehoe to reluctantly leave the Park, return back to Puerto Natales, to a good bed and plenty of hot water! Hotel. (B,L)

DAY 9 FLIGHT TO CHILEAN LAKE DISTRICT - LLANQUILHUE

An early start for the return drive to Punta Arenas and our 2 hour flight north to Puerto Montt the gateway to the Lake District.

A short distance inland is Chile's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest lake, Llanquihue and its classy lakeside resort Puerto Varas where we may stop for lunch. Hosteria. (B)

The Lake District and Auracania stretch from Puerto Montt north to Temuco. Away from the green and fertile coastal plain it is a region of hills, lakes and forests made more distinct and attractive by numerous volcanoes, often snowcapped, which rise over the landscape. Geothermal spas and bathing pools are common here. Add the Auracaria (or monkey puzzle trees) and the land takes on an almost surreal nature. Volcanoes apart it could easily be mistaken for Bavaria or Switzerland. Germans especially moved here in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and their farms and settlements still reflect their culture.

DAY 10 OSORNO HIGH PASS - LLANQUILHUE

The pure symmetry of Volcan Osorno makes it one of Chile's best known volcanoes. It is a hard climb due to its crevassed snowy slopes but we can walk up its flank to a high pass with a great view of its upper slopes and the surrounding volcanoes; the craggy Volcan Puntiagudo and Volcan Calbuco which erupted violently in April 2015, covering the land around with ash and cinder. To the west is the Lake District's 2<sup>nd</sup> biggest lake, Lago Todos los Santos and the much higher Volcan Tronador (3554m) on the Argentina border in the distance. 5-6 hours. Hosteria. (B,L)

DAY 11 PUCÓN

This popular town on the south shore of Lago Villarrica has become the adventure sports capital of Chile. A long drive (280km), but always interesting, part of the way on the fast Pan-America highway and the remainder on good roads through the heart of the Lake District. Lodge. (B)



*Pucon & Volcan Villarrica – smoking!!*

DAY 12 PUCÓN

A short distance from Pucon (35km) is the scenic Huerquehue National Park and Lago Tinquilco. Our trail passes through temperate rainforest with native trees and ferns as we climb around small lakelets, waterfalls and cascades up to a viewpoint

with fine views of Villarrica volcano and the surrounding lakes. 5-6 hours. A chance also for a geothermal bathe before returning to Pucon. Lodge. (B,L)

DAY 13 PUCÓN - VILLARRICA VOLCANO (2847m)

This will be a memorable day – climbing an active volcano! First we drive up to the ski station at approx 1500m. The ascent is straightforward on scree and snow and we will use ice axes and crampons to keep things safe, usually there is a well-worn trail through the snow. Previous experience wearing crampons is not necessary. Care is needed at the top because down in the crater, a lake of red hot lava will be bubbling and rumbling. Very exciting! 7+ hours. Hotel. (B,L)

*If Volcan Villarrica remains active and 'off limits' then Volcan Quetrupillan (2,360m) will be an excellent alternative. 'Q' is more of a mountain day although with the lower height of the volcano, crampons are unlikely to be needed.*

DAY 14 CONGUILLIO NATIONAL PARK - MALALCAHUELLO

Conguillio National Park is dominated by the bulk of the continually active Volcan Llaima. An afternoon hike towards the Sierra Nevada ridge above Lago Conguillio will give some great views before we continue to Malalcahuello and Volcan Lonquimay. 5 hour drive. Hike 4 hrs. Hosteria. (B,D)

DAY 15 LONQUIMAY HIKE - MALALCAHUELLO

A fascinating hike through an auracaria (monkey puzzle) forest will be a highlight. A marked trail starts from the new hotel near the Corralco ski station at 1450m. After skirting the edge of the forest we climb up ash and cinder slopes to a saddle on the south side of the volcano with great views and follow the trail pleasantly down through the forest back towards our hosteria in Malalcahuello. 6-7 hours. (B,L,D)

DAY 16 LONQUIMAY VOLCANO (2865m) - MALALCAHUELLO

Our ascent begins at a higher point on the same road as the previous day, at around 1700m. A steady easy-angled approach on a lava and cinder slope progresses to a ridge which steepens and leads to the summit. If there is snow this will require more care but it isn't difficult. On a fine day it is possible to see 14 other volcanoes including the nearby Crater Navidad, a cinder outlying crater formed on Christmas day 1988 and a popular attraction which we may have energy to visit after our climb! 7 hours. Malalcahuello. (B,L,D)



*Approaching summit of Lonquimay*

DAY 17 FLIGHT TO SANTIAGO and DEPART

Time to leave this wonderful part of Chile. We drive to Temuco, fly to Santiago and depart.....

...OR see overleaf some EXCITING EXTENSION OPTIONS.....

## ENJOY A SANTIAGO WEEKEND

### DAY 1 (17) SANTIAGO

DAY 17 is a Saturday. Santiago, with snowcapped mountains (the Andes) providing a stunning backdrop, is a stylish city with a distinct European feel and is an enjoyable and interesting place to spend some time. A great start today is the Santa Lucia hill, a rocky hill and viewpoint which rears up out of city centre itself. Hotel.

### DAY 2 SANTIAGO

Sunday is the best day to spend in Chile's capital when the bustle of the weekdays is absent. There are guided walking tours around the centre to see the main square – La Plaza de Armas, the Moneda Palace, Cathedral, museums, the giant fish market (Mercado Central) and the riverside parks that run the length of the central city. A guided bike tour is recommended also. There is time to make independent forays, perhaps across the river to 'bohemian' Bellavista and the San Cristobal Hill or to use the impressive metro system out to the Museum of Memory and Human Rights with its stark profiles of the cruel days of the Pinochet regime.

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## SOME OTHER EXTENSION OPPORTUNITIES:

### 1) ARGENTINA – HIGH ANDES FITZROY TREK (9 days ex El Calafate)



*Fitzroy Massif from Lago Madre. Photo Shawntel Stapleton*

Join High Places Argentina part of 'High Andes of Patagonia' trip Days 3-10, Fitzroy Trek to Patagonian Ice Cap.

This trip **precedes** the 'Volcanoes and Patagonia' trip and begins with a flight from Buenos Aires to Patagonia (El Calafate).



## 2) CHILE – ATACAMA EXPERIENCE (4-6 days ex Santiago)



*Relaxing in hot pools beneath Volcan San Pedro de Atacama*

This extension begins with a flight from Santiago to Calama and may include a selection of day tours/walks from San Pedro de Atacama: Valle de Luna, Machuca, El Tatio Geyser, Salar de Atacama or Lascar volcano climb.

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## 3) CHILE – CHILEAN FIORDS by boat (3/4 days ex Puerto Montt)



*Sailing through the Patagonian Fiords*

A 'travellers' adventure on a freighter/ferry cruise 3-4 days down through the Chilean Fiords passage from Puerto Montt to Puerto Natales, following in the footsteps of Fitzroy and Darwin.

This precedes our 'Volcanoes and Patagonia' trip. Fly Santiago to Puerto Montt in time to join the Ferry which departs Puerto Montt on Fridays. It arrives in Puerto Natales on the Monday from where you would overnight ready to join our 'Volcanoes and Patagonia' group on DAY 2

**Contact us for further details of all the extension options.**

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