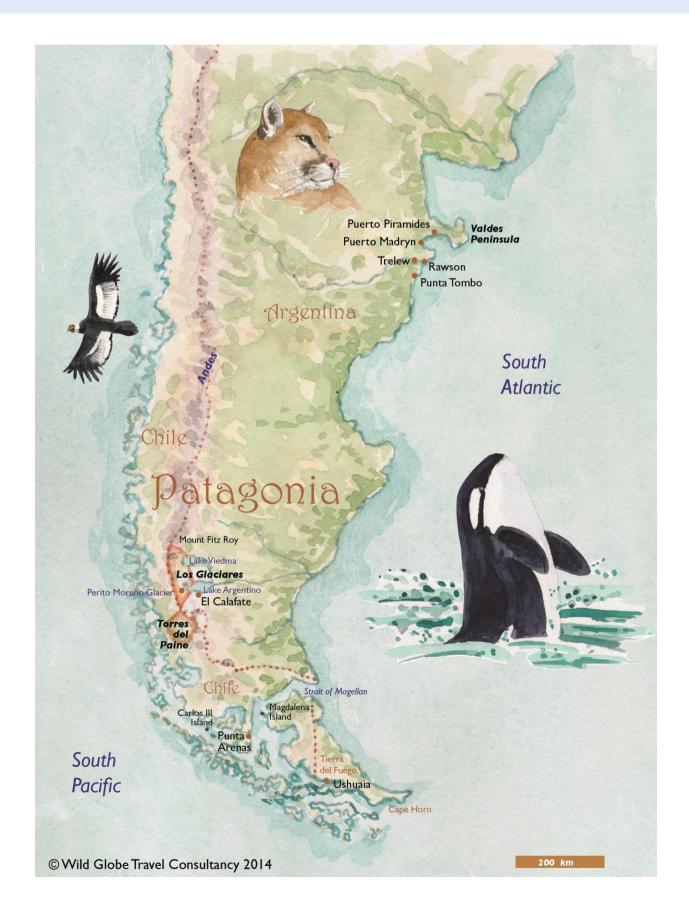


Wild Globe Travel Consultancy

Tailored Wildlife, Wilderness and adventure Travel across the Globe.

14 Greenfield Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN21 1]J, UK

Tel: +44 (0)1323 731865 | Email: jason.woolgar@btinternet.com Website: www.wildglobetours.com



Visions of Patagonia - 32 Days

Major Destinations

Santiago - Punta Arenas - Strait of Magellan - Magdalena Island - Francisco Coloane Marine Park - Carlos III Island - Torres Del Paine National Park - El Calafate - Los Glaciares National Park - Perito Moreno Glacier - Lake Argentino - Lake Viedma - Mount Fitz Roy - Gaiman - Rawson - Punta Tombo - Puerto Madryn - Valdes Peninsula - Puerto Piramides - Punta Norte - Buenos Aires



Tour Highlights and Activities

There are few areas in the world as outrageously beautiful as Patagonia and this tour is the ultimate combination of resplendent landscapes and equally impressive wildlife. Any trip where you are more or less guaranteed to encounter puma, orca and humpback whale is always going to be exceptional, but this tour also encompasses some of the finest scenery imaginable, including the towering granite peaks of Torres Del Paine and the vast ice walls of the Perito Moreno Glacier. The hiking in this area has been renowned for decades and we will take a number of day hikes and horse rides amid some truly unparalleled scenery, against an everlasting backdrop of the mighty Andes. Boats and kayaks will be used to explore gorgeous fjords as we search for whales and dolphins and jeeps will carry us up steep mountain trails to gaze at condors flying at eye level. Our incredible journey will bring us face to face with a diverse and unusual collection of animals, ranging from tiny, amusing armadillos to huge bull elephant seals, and we will walk among half a million penguins and sail beside hundreds of cavorting dolphins. Torres Del Paine is the best place in all the Americas to see puma, it is often possible to spend several hours with them at close quarters, and the shores of the Valdes Peninsula play host to one of nature's great annual events, orcas leaving the water and beaching themselves to hunt sea lions. The tour has been largely planned around this one extraordinary spectacle, but we will witness many others during our stay and will leave this enthralling land with a host of unforgettable experiences and magical memories.

Day 1 - Santiago to Punta Arenas

Arrive in the capital Santiago and catch a connecting flight to Punta Arenas, the gateway to Chilean Patagonia. Although this flight is being used as a transfer, it is also one of the continent's most scenic and those fortunate enough to secure a window seat will have an almost uninterrupted view of the legendary Andes, the world's longest mountain range, stretching 7000km down the spine of South America and across seven countries. Depending on when exactly our international flights arrive, it may be necessary to overnight in Santiago, but this can be worked into the programme and we will meet our local guide as soon as we arrive in Punta Arenas. By way of an initial orientation, we can take a short walk down to the Strait of Magellan, the famous channel that links the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, first navigated by the celebrated Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan in 1520.



Day 2 - Punta Arenas

We have an early start this morning for the first exciting activity of the trip, an inflatable Zodiac boat tour on the renowned strait to Magdalena Island, a nesting colony at this time of year for more than 60,000 pairs of magellanic penguins. The island can be explored on foot, with fabulous opportunities to photograph the penguins and their extremely fluffy chicks at very close quarters, and we will also visit nearby Marta Island, where we can approach more penguins and South American sea lions, but not actually alight. On a tour that will introduce us to so many diverse species throughout the country, we may today also encounter elephant seals, two highly distinctive dolphin species, commerson's and peale's, and, depending on our good fortunate, even humpback whales. We have a number of options for the afternoon, including kayaking on the Strait of Magellan or horse riding with great coastal views just south of town.



Days 3 to 6 - Punta Arenas to Cape San Isidro to Carlos III Island to Punta Arenas

This morning we depart on a very special short trip to visit the rich feeding grounds of the humpback whale and guaranteed sightings of these majestic creatures, many of which are likely to be at extremely close quarters as they approach our boat. Our initial ocean transfer will take us south along the Strait of Magellan to Cape San Isidro for one night, before we depart the next morning for Carlos III Island within the Francisco Coloane Marine Park. San Isidro is one of the best places in Patagonia to see the endangered huemul,



or south Andean deer, and we can either spend our first afternoon searching the coastal forests for these striking animals or go kayaking, possibly with a pod of inquisitive dolphins for company. The next three days will be spent cruising to and then exploring the humpback whale's main feeding areas around Carlos III Island, with the opportunity to photograph some of the largest mammals on the planet breaching and fluking athletically as they dive for the abundant krill, often just a few metres from our boat. On one of the best short marine tours that I am aware of, we also have an excellent chance to encounter a host of pelagic birds, penguins, sea lions, dolphins, South American fur seals and possibly even killer whales. It is always a wonderful thrill to watch these beautiful 'wolves of the sea' cutting menacingly through the waves and it is not only the

wildlife here that is spectacular, as the imposing landscapes are equally astounding, particularly the dramatic Santa Ines Glacier, which we will make a point of visiting and which few will ever forget. Our ecolodge is ideally situated with splendid ocean views and the blend of dazzling wildlife and astonishing scenery is a combination that we will enjoy repeatedly at various destinations within this magical area. Our final day will be spent at sea as we travel back to Punta Arenas to overnight.



Day 7 - Punta Arenas to Torres Del Paine National Park

We leave Punta Arenas early this morning by road and transfer to one of my favourite destinations in this or any other country, Torres Del Paine National Park, an immense, dramatic wilderness, where the beauty of the scenery is rivalled only by the exquisite solitude experienced whilst exploring it. This is a special place, where it is possible to track a puma on foot until you are staring at one another from less than ten metres and where we can watch a dozen or so immature Andean condors learning to fly from the jagged peaks in the presence of their hugely impressive parents. After lunch and an opportunity to settle at our lodge, selected in one of the best wildlife areas in the park, we will meet our exceptional local guide, who has lived within the national park for more than twenty years and who knows every inch of her sparkling terrain, including how and where to find the generally elusive puma. We will begin our search this afternoon and have a very good chance of encountering this elegant animal over the next few days.

Days 8 to 13 - Torres Del Paine National Park

Although highly representative of Patagonia, the wildlife at Torres Del Paine is very different to that found across the savannahs and rainforests of much of South America and we will spend the next six days looking for puma and a number of other unusual species,

many of which we are likely to encounter. Chilla and culpeo foxes are common, particularly around human areas where they tend to scavenge, and geoffroy's cat and pampas cat also occur, although they are rarely seen. Guanaco, a relative of the domesticated llama and the puma's main prev, abound and huemul, humboldt's hognosed skunk, large hairy armadillo, pichi, another type of armadillo, European hare and southern mountain cavy are all regularly observed. Patagonian weasel and lesser grison are two of the notoriously elusive nocturnal mammals, but we will look for these and other animals when we spotlight each evening along the roads around our lodge. Condors are frequently spotted overhead and on cliff ledges, while Chilean flamingo, magellanic woodpecker, lesser



rhea, upland goose, black-necked swan and the black-chested buzzard eagle, are just a few of the other bird species that we should chance upon. Although much of our time will be devoted to searching for wildlife, both in our vehicle and on foot, we also have the option of taking a number of hikes amid some of the most mesmerising landscapes imaginable, where idyllic turquoise lakes shimmer resplendently against the magnificent backdrop of the imposing Cuernos del Paine massif and the three iconic granite towers after which Torres Del Paine is named. The views of and from the Nordenenskjold and Pehoe lakes are exceptional and the power



generated through the narrow gorge of the Salto Grande waterfall, which flows from the former into the latter, is deceptively impressive given that the surging torrent does not fall from any great height. The Lago Grey Glacier is another outstanding natural feature that we will devote an afternoon to, as we have the opportunity to take a boat trip to the very edge of this dramatic sheet of ice, and the area around the lightly forested, southern section of the lake is ideal habitat for huemul. When we get tired of walking we have the option of extended horse rides along a range of arresting trails, or of simply relaxing and enjoying the wonderful panoramas and gorgeous sunsets at a variety of commanding viewpoints easily reached from the road. The majority of these areas are all ideal for puma, as they can be encountered almost anywhere within the park and, at the time of year for when the tour has been specifically

planned, there is a very good chance of finding a mother with young cubs. Whether we do or not will depend less on luck and more on our incomparable guide, as he knows these creatures intimately and where we can search for individuals that he has watched grow since they were just a tiny bundle of fur. On some days we are likely to be able to spend hours admiring one animal, while on others we may see several or even a mother with young, with the unique possibility of approaching if our guide feels that we will not disturb their natural behaviour. There is nothing quite like standing a few metres away from these majestic predators, with no vehicles or other guests for company, against a background of one of the most magnificent landscapes on earth.









Day 14 - Torres Del Paine National Park to El Calafate (Los Glaciares National Park)

Whilst it is always difficult to say goodbye to Torres Del Paine, our early start this morning will culminate in another highlight of the trip, a first visit to Los Glaciares National Park and the breathtaking Perito Moreno Glacier, a vastly impressive and constantly expanding wall of ice stretching over 30km and extending into Lake Argentino to form a natural dam when it reaches the opposite shore. Our journey takes us beyond the borders of Chile and into Argentina, where we will meet our local guide at the pleasant town of El Calafate before proceeding directly to Perito Moreno. One of almost 50 glaciers within the Southern Patagonian Ice Field, Perito Moreno is the most visited and a number of excellent vantage points have been constructed along a scenic trail through and above the pretty lakeside woods. Although these provide several superb photographic opportunities, the best way to appreciate the immense power of this continually evolving natural phenomenon is on the cruise that takes us along the sheer 70m high barrier of ice, which groans and roars as vast shards of ice break away and fall spectacularly into the embracing depths of the lake. There are few places on the planet that simply take your breath away when they first come into view, but Perito Moreno is definitely one and when we have finished the stunning boat tour, we will take the opportunity to walk the trails overlooking the glacier, as these provide an entirely different perspective and a real sense of the magnitude of this colossal marvel. Having witnessed one of nature's undisputed masterpieces, we will complete a memorable day at our elegant lodge within the stunning La Anita Valley, with sweeping, panoramic views of Mount Frias, superb food and an irresistible indoor swimming pool.

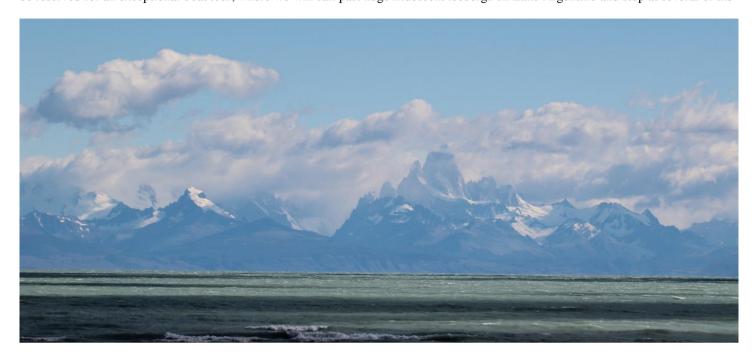


Days 15 to 20 - Los Glaciares National Park

Like many of the great ecological spectacles across the world, Perito Moreno is located within an area of extraordinary beauty and our next six days will be devoted to exploring Los Glaciares National Park and the surrounding areas. Our time will be split between three equally delightful lodges, one to the south of Lake Argentino, the second to the north of the same lake in the Upsala Glacier region and the third in the heart of the national park near Lake Viedma. Although we will certainly encounter a great deal of wildlife, most of



the species found at Torres Del Paine are also found here, this section of the tour is as much about taking time to discover the natural splendour of Patagonia and immersing ourselves in this vast, haunting landscape. The arid and almost desolate Patagonian Steppe is a perfect starting point, at a rustic lodge nestled within a windswept La Anita Valley and surrounded by grand postcard views of Mount Frias, Lake Argentino and Torres Del Paine to the south. With no buildings to disturb the grandeur, leisurely hikes and horse rides can take on an almost hypnotic quality, as a sea of golden grass melts into the horizon and is lost within the shadows of the timeless sentinels dwarfing the valley. Alternatively, for those who want to take a break from walking, jeep safaris offer the best chance of spotting multiple animals relatively quickly and are the easiest way to visit some of the most scenic elevated areas. One full day will be reserved for an exceptional boat tour, where we will sail past huge iridescent icebergs on Lake Argentino and stop at several of the



massive glaciers from which they were born. At 50km long and almost 10km wide, Upsala Glacier eclipses even Perito Moreno and we will no doubt feel even less significant before the imposing walls of the Spegazzini Glacier, which rise imperiously from the calm waters of the lake and extend 130m into a cloudless azure sky. The same boat will transport us to the forested shores of Onelli Bay and a chance to walk among the blazing scarlet flowers of the fire bush and to eat a delicious lunch beside Onelli Lake, where three glaciers converge amid a cluster of snowcapped mountains. For a more intimate encounter with Perito Moreno, a fascinating ice hike can be arranged, where we will get the chance to don crampons and explore the deep caverns and ice blue pools that litter the sparkling, almost surreal surface of this frozen behemoth. As we travel further north, the crowds that gather around Perito Moreno and Lake Argentino disappear and we will be alone when we ascend, either on foot or in a 4-wheel drive, to probably the most dramatic vantage point of the trip, a view across and beyond the surface of Upsala, a glacier that has been retreating at an alarming rate for the best part of four decades. In a land of epic panoramas, the one that will greet us on this expedition is fairly tough to beat, as the sundrenched glacier, sapphire lake and a rugged, mountainous background all merge into a mesmerising, frozen wonderland. This rather special scene very much sets the tone for the rest of our stay here, as we continue north to explore vast areas of pristine wilderness and one spellbinding landscape somehow improves on another. Much of our time will be spent hiking and riding through leafy, secluded forest, along the open shores of huge, opulent lakes and up steep, winding mountain paths. We will gaze upon Lake Viedma and the glacier that feeds it, as well as the stunning turquoise waters of the Blue Lagoon and the renowned Mount Fitz Roy, which is as evocative as its reputation suggests, particularly when viewed from horseback across the serene expanse of Viedma. Whilst we will no doubt continue to encounter an array of diverse wildlife, we will not search for specific animals and will instead savour the atmosphere and tranquillity of a remote landscape as it should be experienced, in almost complete solitude and with sufficient time to discover each of its unique treasures.

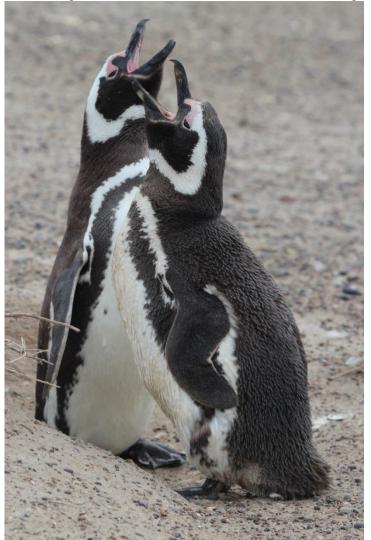
Day 21 - Los Glaciares National Park to El Calafate to Trelew to Gaiman

We depart early this morning for a full travelling day and an initial transfer by road back to El Calafate to catch the afternoon flight to Trelew via Buenos Aires. We should land around 9pm and will meet our local guide for the final section of the trip before driving the short distance to Gaiman to overnight at an attractive farm on the banks of the Chubut River.

Days 22 to 23 - Gaiman (Rawson, Punta Tombo and Puerto Madryn)

Our next two days will be busy ones, as we visit a number of different sites to look for a variety of animals, including coypu, white-eared opossum, large hairy armadillo, pichi and European hare within the grounds of our accommodation. With a little good fortune we could easily see fifteen different mammal species over two productive days and will begin with a short drive west of Gaiman to a small colony of southern mountain viscacha, living in the most easterly extreme of their range. This is also a good spot for a first sighting of Patagonian mara, a large hare-like rodent found only in Argentina, as well as possibly chilla and culpeo foxes. Another easy drive will take us to Rawson, where we will board a small boat to search for commerson's dolphin, a tiny, highly distinctive black and white dolphin, and South American sea lion, which are generally littered around the dock and are easily observed before we even depart. Our next destination will be the magellanic penguin colony at Punta Tombo, which is home to around half a million penguins and a multitude of southern mountain cavy, a type of guinea pig, often seen scurrying from bush to bush to escape the unwanted attention of the many birds of prey that shadow the colony. Guanaco are also common and there are some great

photographic opportunities, as these large attractive animals stroll through the dunes and sparse vegetation, surrounded by dozens of tiny and vastly contrasting penguins. The public beach at Isla Escondida, or Hidden Island, is another must, as a group of impressive southern elephant seals have made the area their home and it is possible to approach to within a couple of metres without disturbing



them. Although our last two stops, Puerto Madryn and Punta Loma, can be accessed from the Valdes Peninsula, we will visit them on our final day at Gaiman, as this will allow us to concentrate our efforts on the actual peninsula when we move on, without having to drive back and forth. At Puerto Madryn we will take a tour to view dusky dolphins and it is not unusual to spend an enthralling hour or more watching feeding groups of up to 300 graceful dolphins somersaulting acrobatically around the boat. The South American sea lion colony at Punta Loma lies a short distance to the south and is often visited by a handful of South American fur seals.

Day 24 - Gaiman to Valdes Peninsula

After a leisurely breakfast following a busy couple of days, we drive north to the magical Valdes Peninsula, the final destination of our trip and a chance to observe one of the most astonishing and intense wildlife encounters on the planet. At the time of writing, it is 23 years since the ground-breaking BBC documentary 'The Trials of Life' was first aired and the world witnessed the extraordinary behaviour of killer whales stranding themselves on the beaches of Patagonia in order to hunt sea lion pups. Now we will visit the very same beaches in the hope of experiencing the same remarkable activity first-hand, as the orcas attack seasonally when the sea lions pup and the entire tour has been planned around this single event. This does not ensure that we are guaranteed to witness this brutal, yet absorbing natural spectacle, as no one has been able to predict when the strikes will occur and the orcas do not appear to follow a regular pattern, at least not one that we have been able to comprehend. To us the attacks are entirely random and the bad news is that you can spend six days watching the best areas at the best times, only to be informed that the first attack occurred within a few hours of you departing to catch the flight home, as was the case for me on my last visit in 2013. The good news, on the other hand, is that the orca activity along this stretch of coast is

extremely high at this time of year and is not restricted to one area or indeed, one type of behaviour. My compensation in 2013 was watching an older female killer whale teaching a juvenile to beach for several hours, as orca societies are built around a matriarchal system similar to elephants. Although there were sea lions on the shore, none were within reach and this was clearly a training exercise with a mother passing on her knowledge to the next generation. As an experience, it was every bit as riveting as watching these whales hunt and whilst I would estimate that our chances of observing one or more orca attacks during our seven available days



are probably only slightly better than 50/50, the likelihood of us seeing killer whales in general is much higher. I have never failed to see them here and our other advantage is that the attacks are tide dependent, which means that we do not have to sit in one spot all day and can instead coincide our vigils with the high tides, when the narrow channels that the orcas use to approach the beach are at their deepest and the whales can manoeuvre right up on to the shore in search of their unsuspecting prey. The rest of our time can then be spent exploring the best wildlife areas, including along the coast looking for orca pods hunting in a more conventional manner. Although these migratory predators can strike in several different bays, we will concentrate our efforts around the public observation decks at Punta Norte, as these overlook the main attack channels and the majority of beachings are photographed from here. Special

permits are required to access the beach directly behind the sea lion colony for a much closer view of any possible activity and I will apply for these in advance for at least three of our seven full days, depending on the requirements of the group.

Days 25 to 31 - Valdes Peninsula

Given the austere setting, the entire area is bereft of trees, it would be easy to imagine that the Valdes Peninsula is almost devoid of life, certainly when you venture inland away from the beaches and marine mammals. However, nothing could be further from the

truth, as this is one of Argentina's wildlife strongholds and an impressive variety of animals thrive within this deceptively bleak landscape. Including seasonal migrants, around 180 bird species have been recorded on this one headland and we are likely to encounter magellanic penguin, Chilean flamingo, burrowing owl, lesser rhea, elegant crested tinamou, steamer duck, peregrine falcon, red-backed hawk and many others. When we are not on orca alert, we can spend time exploring all of the best wildlife areas and, given that we have more than seven days here, would be unlucky not to observe guanaco, humboldt's hog-nosed skunk, chilla, large hairy armadillo, pichi, Patagonian mara, European hare, southern mountain cavy and magellanic tuco-tuco. Three cat species also occur, puma, pampas cat and geoffroy's cat, as well as lesser grison and Patagonian weasel, although all five of these animals are notoriously difficult to find and will



require an element of good fortune. In fact, according to most experts, the Patagonian weasel is actually extinct in this region, which is fairly strange given that I have observed them personally and know a good area for us to search when we spotlight after dinner each evening. One animal that we are sure to see is the merino sheep, which were first imported from Australia and have been farmed here for generations. These sheep are very much part of the financial and cultural fabric of life and the duration of our stay will be spent at one of the oldest farms, or estancias, on the peninsula. The accommodation is exceedingly comfortable and homely, but the main benefit of staying here is the private beach, which we can access at any time and from where orcas are regularly photographed a few metres from shore. Despite the stunted flora and stark environment, a great deal of the peninsula is extremely picturesque and some of the views along the coast are ravishing, particularly in the late afternoon, when the sky is a deep blue and the sun bathes the cliffs and



dunes in a rich golden light. We can enjoy many of these splendid panoramas from horseback, as there are several attractive trails across the massive ranch, including one exceptional spot to take in the most glorious of sunsets. The nearby southern elephant seal colony is another lovely setting and it is always rewarding to spend a couple of hours watching these gentle giants moving cumbersomely across the beach or burying themselves in sand as the heat of the day intensifies. We will also visit South American sea lion colonies and spend time searching along the coast for South American fur seals and dusky dolphins, but only when the tides are not in our favour, as the orcas generally attack an hour or two either side of high tide and we will be sitting waiting patiently for those few seconds of explosive and unforgettable action. As we will be spending more than a week during the optimum

hunting period, we have an excellent chance of watching these silent killers descend on the beach in some form and a reasonable chance of witnessing one or more of them make a successful attack. However thrilling and dramatic events of this kind undoubtedly are, they are also disturbing in many ways, as we will have spent long periods enjoying the exuberant antics of the sea lion pups and it can be very difficult to watch these young creatures being killed, particularly when they are not despatched quickly and the killer whales celebrate their success by throwing the seals across the water, like a dog playing with a favourite toy. Of course this is a totally natural occurrence, that we will not influence in any way, but it is good to spare a thought for all of the animals involved and to remember that this is a life and death struggle playing out before our eyes. Whatever the emotions, and they are often a combination of elation, horror and sheer reverence, this is a truly humbling experience and a fitting way to end our stay in this dynamic and incomparable land.

Day 32 - Valdes Peninsula to Trelaw to Buenos Aires

Depending on the time of our flight, we may be able to enjoy one final activity this morning, before we drive back to Trelaw to catch the flight to Buenos Aires, where our magnificent tour will end. Overnight accommodation can be arranged in Buenos Aires if necessary, as well as onward travel to other notable destinations within Argentina.







Additional Options

Both Chile and Argentina can be visited independently and each provide a number of wonderful and contrasting options for adventurous travellers. Argentina has the edge in terms of wildlife viewing, as it is by far the larger country and encompasses more diverse habitats than its neighbour. That said, both countries are superb destinations and each have their own speciality wildlife and individual charm. In terms of Patagonia, this tour has been designed as a taste of a vast region and to specifically view humpback whale, puma and orca. Extended periods have been devoted to each area, partly to ensure success and partly to allow us to experience the region naturally, without having to rush from one location to the next. Consequently, there are numerous additional destinations that can be added to a Patagonian itinerary, including an entire network of national parks on the Chilean side of the border, many of which feature dramatically beautiful fjords, imposing volcanos and stunning turquoise lakes. Chiloe Island is a great choice in terms of viewing two otter species, southern pudu, the world's smallest deer, darwin's fox and even blue whale at the right time of year, while Parque Pumalin, which can be accessed from Chiloe, is a harmonious retreat for a few days gentle hiking in an idyllic setting. Pumalin is administered by the Conservation Land Trust, an organisation created by visionary Douglas Tompkins, which protects



hundreds of thousands of acres of pristine wilderness across both Chile and Argentina. Their latest project, the Patagonia National Park, bordering Lake Cochrane in Chile, involved purchasing one of the largest sheep ranches in the country and allowing the land to regenerate after years of overgrazing. Although the project is not yet complete, it can still be visited and the final park will ultimately include the neighbouring Tamango and Jeinimeni national reserves, making it one of the largest protected areas in Patagonia. In Argentina the options are just as varied and Ushuala is the access point to Tierra Del Fuego National Park, a captivating blend of jagged mountains, dense beech forests, deep glacial valleys, lush meadows and rich peat bogs, delightfully adorned by a liberal scattering of vivid lakes, waterfalls and glaciers. In addition to a variety of endemic wildlife, the park is home to a large population of North American beavers, as 25 breeding pairs were introduced by the Argentine government in the mid-1940s in the hope of creating a viable fur industry. Needless to say the venture was not successful, but with no large predators to keep their numbers in check, the beavers certainly were and there are now estimated to be around 100,000 extremely happy rodents across the region. Sadly, as is so often the case when humans interfere with delicate ecosystems, the beavers have caused extensive damage to an environment not suited to deal with them and there are plans to eradicate the entire population. Ushuala, famous as the most southerly city in the world, is also the embarkation point for some superb Antarctic voyages, which begin by sailing down the historic Beagle Channel, named after the HMS Beagle that navigated these waters on two famous voyages between 1826 and 1836, the second of which included a young naturalist by the name of Charles Darwin. You do not need to visit Antarctica to cruise one of the loveliest stretches of water on earth, as lots of boat tours are available and far more photographic opportunities. Much the same can be said for all of Patagonia, as there are not sufficient superlatives to adequately describe the wonders to be discovered in this enchanting region.











14 Greenfield Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN21 1JJ, UK

