

American Alpine Institute

– Program Itinerary –

Fitzroy–Cerro Torre Trek & Climb

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Location: Los Glaciares National Park, Argentine Patagonia

Flight destination: Calafate, Argentina, via Buenos Aires

Characteristics:

- **Strenuousness for climbers:** Some days are short treks with relatively little elevation gain or loss, while days on the climbs and Marconi Pass are at least 6 to 10 hours.
- **Moderate for trekkers:** Some days are short treks with relatively little elevation gain or loss, while days on Loma del Diablo and Loma de Plieque Tumbado are much more of a workout. As for all programs in the mountains, the better shape you are in, the more fun you will have.
- **Carrying Gear:** If you trek only, you will only carry a daypack on this trip. If you make the climbs, you will carry a full pack for at least two days of the trip. Cerro Velluda is a day climb, so you'll only carry a day pack on that ascent, but climbing to Marconi Pass you will need to carry all your personal gear and a share of group equipment. A personal porter can be arranged for an additional fee.
- **Lodging:** All lodging is on a twin shared basis – one night in hotel on arrival in Calafate, two nights in a hosteria in El Chalten at road's end, two nights in the Fitzroy Adventure Camp (hot showers!), other nights in tents. Please enquire regarding purchase of a single supplement (usually but not always available).
- **Physical condition requirements:** you must be in good shape to enjoy the trekking; you must be in very good shape to enjoy the climbing. In addition to general physical conditioning, we recommend aerobic training before the trip.
- **Previous technical mountaineering experience:** not required.
- **Previous experience of hiking and camping:** required.

ITINERARY

Breakfast (B) sack lunch (SL), dinner (D)

Day 1 – Arrival in Buenos Aires; change planes and fly to El Calafate.

Arrive in El Calafate, cab to hotel.
D, Hotel in El Calafate

Day 2 – Optional trip to Perito Moreno Glacier; drive to El Chalten

Optional excursion to Perito Moreno Balconies, an opportunity to see one of the world's major ice flows. It is also protected by the World Biosphere Reserve from United Nations Education and Culture (UNESCO). Perito Moreno is one of the few glaciers in the world that remains stable in its mass, with seasonal fluctuations in the position of its snout and regular calving of ice into Lago Argentino. At times the terminus creates a natural dam in the lake. The water level rises on one side until it suddenly breaks the ice dam. Though only a few people have the luck to see the natural dam break, you are almost certain to see huge lumps of ice break off and fall into the lake to float away as icebergs. In the afternoon, we will take the regular bus to El Chaltén, approximately a four-hour drive. You will meet your guide and have a briefing on the trip.

D, Hosteria in El Chaltén

Day 3 – Cerro Torre

We meet our pack llamas and hike to Camp Thorwood near Laguna Torre where we will stay overnight. We begin our trek from the hosteria in El Chaltén following the Fitz Roy river valley along a good path until reaching the first lookout point where we will get great views of the Cerro Torre-Adelas range and the spectacular spire of Cerro Torre. We will trek to the relatively young moraine around Lago Torre which we will climb up and over to view the lake and the Torre glacier tumbling into it and great views of Cerro Torre. We will hike to the Mirador Maestri for an even closer view of the Grande Glacier and Cerro Torre.

El Chaltén – Laguna Torre: Elevation Gain: 150 m (492 feet)

Laguna Torre- Maestri Look out: Elevation Gain 200 m (656 feet)

B, BL, D, Camp Thorwood

Day 4 – Torre Ice Clinic

A day for the practice of alpine ice skills on the Torre Glacier. We do a Tyrolean traverse across a fixed steel cable to cross the Fitzroy River. Throughout the day we enjoy spectacular views of Fitz Roy, Cerro Torre, and their surrounding towers. Skills training include ice axe, cramponing, and glacier travel.

Laguna Torre to the Glacier: Elevation gain: 300m (984 feet), elevation loss: 200m (656 feet)

B, BL, D, Camp Thorwood

Day 5 – Laguna Torre – Camp Poincenot

We have an optional photographic hike to Mirador Maestri for sunrise alpenglow on Cerro Torre, and then make an easy trek up the valley on the

east side of Fitzroy to Camp Poincenot. Lamas move gear to the new camp.

Elevation Gain: 200m (656 feet)
B, BL, D, Camp Poincenot

Day 6 – Camp Poincenot – Punta Velluda – Poincenot

Climbers: Climb Velluda Peak. This is an easy glacier climb with a short rock scramble at the summit. It offers spectacular views of the east face of Fitzroy as well as the other nearby towers.

Elevation Gain: 1200m (3937 feet)

Trekkers: Climb Punta Velluda part way or all the way if desired, or day-hike. This is the first day that climbers will be off on their own. Velluda is an easy peak with moderate glacier travel and a short and easy rock scramble at the top. Trekkers often like to do some or all of this climb. Those not wanting to participate will hike on their own in the area of Poincenot Camp, with beautiful streams, open southern beech forests (Nothofagus), and good birdlife to photograph. The trails in this area are well maintained and easy to follow. The entire group camps again at Poincenot.

B, BL, D, Camp Poincenot

Day 7 – Poincenot – Fitzroy Adventure Camp (FRAC)

Beautiful trek up the Rio Blanco with side visit to Laguna Piedras Blancas and good views of Piedras Blancas Glacier, which flows down from Cerro Electrico. We will arrive to Hosteria El Pilar, where a transfer will be waiting for us in order to drive us 5 km to our next camp, the Fitz Roy Adventure Camp (FRAC).

Llamas will move gear.

FRAC is a luxury camp on the shores of Las Vueltas River; it has a good infrastructure of services, including bathrooms with showers with hot water, cabins, very good meals, and a sitting room with views of the north face of the Fitz Roy.

Elevation Loss: 250 m (820 feet)
B, BL, D, lodging at FRAC

Day 8 – Trek to La Playita

Climbers: In the morning, we enjoy the surroundings of FRAC and then drive to our next trailhead at the bridge spanning the Rio Electrico River. We establish camp above the west end of Laguna Electrico.

B, BL, D, camp at La Playita

Trekkers: We hike with a trekking guide to Loma del Diablo above the Fitz Roy Adventure Lodge. Loma del Diablo is a small hiking peak north of Fitzroy a little under 900 meters (3000 feet) in elevation. It provides great views of Fitzroy and the surrounding towers. It is the best viewing point of the range from the north.

B, BL, D. Lodging at FRAC.

Day 9 – Paso Marconi

Climbers: Only 30 minutes of walking from our camp bring us to the moraine of the Marconi Glacier. Like most moraines, the terrain here is unstable and doesn't allow the formation of a trail. After this short but challenging stretch, we move onto the glacier itself and enter a vast area of snow and ice. This day is usually the hardest of the expedition. We climb 2400 ft (800 m) on ice and snow with crampons, skirting crevasses of various sizes as we move higher.

The upper Marconi Glacier forms fills pass with ridges rising above it that create a bottleneck and winds here can be significant at times. At the end of the day we arrive at our campsite below our goal, Cerro Marconi Sur, and we are only an hour away from the Southern Patagonian Ice Cap itself. Our goal is to reach the Chilean Mountain Hut at the base of Mt. Gorra Blanca. (If poor weather prevents the climb to the pass on this day, we will practice snow and ice skills on the Marconi Glacier and do a climbing tour on it.)

Elevation Gain: 1000 m (3281 feet) Marconi pass is 1500m (4921') above sea level, and the Chilean Mountain Hut is 1650m (5413') above sea level.

Walking distance: 10 Km. (xx miles) (8/9 hours)

B, BL, D, Chilean Mountain Hut or camp

Trekkers: We transfer to El Chalten and hike to Loma del Pliegue Tumbado with guide.

The Loma del Pliegue Tumbado is a chain of three round rocky summits at 1340m, 1420m and 1550m. (4396 feet, 4659 feet, and 5085 feet). In Spanish "loma" means "hill," and these formations were created when the earth's crust was thrust up and curved but not broken, creating folded superposed "hills." The valley of the Rio Fitz Roy runs north of these summits, and overlooking that valley, Las Lomas the Pliegue Tumbado provide a panoramic view of the Cerro Torre and Fitzroy groups from the south. Many consider this to be the single best view of the whole range.

B, BL, D. Night at FRAC.

Day 10 – Ascent of Cerro Marconi Sur

Climbers: Conditions allowing, we make a snow and ice ascent to the

summit of Cerro Marconi Sur. With clear skies, we get tremendous view of the Fitzroy and Cerro Torre massifs and far out onto the Patagonian Ice Cap. If conditions for the climb are unsuitable and climbers prefer, we also have the option to travel onto the ice cap instead of making the climb.

B, BL, D, Camp,

Trekkers: We will transfer to Lago del Desierto with our guide and make a short hike to Laguna and Glacier Huemul. Return to FRAC for lunch. Free afternoon, hike to the hydroelectric facility or kayak at Condor Lagoon.

Lago del Desierto is a thin and long lake located in the middle of the mountains and running north to south, and the road we use to access it from El Chalten reaches the southern end. From there, a trail leads to the tiny Huemul Lagoon and to the Huemul Glacier. It is a short but steep hike of 45 minutes through a beautiful beech tree forest. Once at the lagoon, we will see the hanging Huemul Glacier. If weather is clear, we will be able to see the north face of Mount Fitz Roy and its satellite peaks, as well as the entire lake. This area receives more annual precipitation than the El Chalten area does 40KM further south, so the same species of vegetation grows more quickly and to greater size.

B, BL, D. night at FRAC.

Day 11 – Paso Marconi - FRAC

Climbers: We will descend Paso Marconi towards the Bridge over Electrico River, where a transfer will be waiting for us to drive us again to the Fitzroy Adventure Camp (FRAC) where we enjoy a well-earned rest!

If we reached Marconi Pass on day 10, this is our climbing day and we camp.

Elevation Loss: 1000 m

B, BL, D, FRAC

Trekkers: Transfer to Electric River bridge and hike west through an open valley towards Piedra del Fraile. Hopefully we will meet the group descending from Paso Marconi on the way, and we will return to FRAC.

B, BL, D. Night at FRAC.

Day 12 – Return to El Chaltén

Free morning for activities and lunch at FRAC. In the afternoon drive to return to El Chaltén. Optional activities (with extra cost):

- 1- Descent of De Las Vueltas River to El Chaltén using kayaks
- 2- Ride to El Chaltén by mountain bike.

If Day 11 was a climbing day, we descend from high camp all the way to El Chaltén.

B, BL, D, Hosteria in El Chaltén, Guide

Day 13 – Drive back to El Calafate

Transfer to the bus station to take the bus to the airport of El Calafate. Fly to Buenos Aires in the afternoon.

B

Inclusions:

- Bus transportation from El Calafate (where flights arrive) to El Chaltén (near the base of the mountains) and back to El Calafate
- Tour to Perito Moreno Glacier with a local tour company
- Mountain guides and assistant depending on group size (from day 3 onwards)
- Radio communication with our office in El Chaltén
- Double tents, cooking equipment, utensils.
- Mountain equipment (ropes, karabiners, maps, compass, GPS, etc.)
- Crampons, harness, ice axe
- Accommodation: on a twin shared basis. See the itinerary for day-to-day details.
- Meals: see itinerary for details
 - B: breakfast
 - BL: box lunch
 - D: dinner

Exclusions:

- Personal Equipment (sleeping bags, clothing etc)
- Services not mentioned in this program
- Drinks in restaurants, and extra drinks
- Tips