

American Alpine Institute

-Program Itinerary-

Southern Patagonian Icecap Expedition

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PROGRAM DETAILS

Climbing in Los Glaciares National Park from our base in the small town of El Chaltén with a circumnavigation of Fitzroy and Cerro Torre groups via Marconi Pass, Passo del Viento, and Passo Huemul.

DIFFICULTY GRADE & PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

- Challenging and very physically demanding.
- Long walks of 6 to 10 hours.
- Each climber carries his or her own equipment, and often part of the general equipment. Some staff assistance is provided for group gear. Personal porters can be arranged.
- Moderate to big gains drops in altitude (400 to 1000 m; 1300 to 3200 ft).
- Lodging in camps, in mountain huts, and in town (twin share accommodation).
- Previous alpine mountaineering and camping experience is required.
- Like most all mountaineering trips, a solid level of physical fitness is required to assure an enjoyable time.

ITINERARY

Breakfast (B), Sack Lunch (SL), Dinner (D)

Day 1 | Arrival to El Calafate.

Take cab on your own to hotel in Calafate
Hotel in El Calafate.

Day 2 | Optional Visit to Perito Moreno Balconies. Bus to El Chaltén

Visit to Perito Moreno Glacier: You will make an excursion with a local tour company to one of the most famous geological sights in the world, the Perito Moreno glacier, at the far end of Lago Argentino, 75 km (46.6 miles) from El Calafate. It is designated as a World Biosphere Reserve by United Nations Education and Culture Organization (UNESCO).

Perito Moreno is one of the few glaciers that are stable in mass but with seasonal fluctuations in the position of its snout. It calves into Lago Argentino and

sometimes the terminus creates a natural damn and part of the lake becomes landlocked. The water level on the side of the lake that has the largest water inflow rises until it suddenly breaks the ice damn and bursts (this usually occurs every 2 to 4 years). On most days it is possible to see huge lumps of ice break off and fall into the lake to float away as icebergs.

In the late afternoon you will return to your hotel to pick up your luggage, transfer by cab to the downtown bus station, and travel by bus from El Calafate to El Chaltén. You'll meet your lead mountain guide that evening and have dinner together while you discuss the itinerary.

B, Hotel in El Chaltén.

Day 3 | El Chaltén – La Playita

You will meet with your guide and have a further briefing on the expedition and an equipment check. Then a private transfer will drive us to Electrico River Bridge, 15 km (9 miles) northwest of El Chaltén, and the starting point of our trek towards the base of Marconi Glacier. The first two hours of walking on a well-marked path will bring us into a forest of Lengas and Ñires along the Electrico River. As we enter the sub alpine zone we will pass by Piedra Fraile (Refugio Los Troncos), the last encounter with civilization before our return to El Chaltén at the end of the expedition.

We will then enter into a great glacier valley surrounded by the peaks Treinta Aniversario, Marconi Sur, and Marconi Norte. From Piedra Fraile, we will follow the southern shore of Lago Electrico, crossing moraines and rocky formations left by the glacier only 70 years ago. Along the way, we will cross the Pollone River on foot from where we will be able to observe the northwest face of Fitz Roy, one of the most dramatic in the range. One last hour of trekking will bring us to the western shore of Electrico Lake, where we will set-up camp only 20 minutes away from the Marconi Glacier. After a well-earned rest we may have some energy left to do some further exploring of the area.

Approximately 6 hours of walking

Distance to cover: 12 km (7.5 miles)

Elevation Gain: 50 meters (165 feet)

B, SL, D, Camp at La Playita

Day 4 | Marconi Pass

We will wake up at dawn, to start our daily routine of the expedition: breakfast, packing up camp, and moving over new terrain. Only 20 minutes of walking will bring us to the Marconi Glacier. A gigantic moraine is our first obstacle - the terrain here is unstable and prevents the formation of a marked path.

After this short but difficult stretch, we will climb on the glacier itself to slowly enter a world of snow and ice. This day is usually the most physically demanding of the

expedition. We will climb 800 meters (2,600 feet) on ice and snow, using crampons and ice axe to carefully navigate around crevasses. Marconi Glacier flows from a pass that, with steep bordering terrain, creates a bottleneck effect with the winds coming from the ice field and the Pacific Ocean. This is normally a very windy area, and if there is rain or snow, it is obviously more challenging. But at the end of the day, we cross into Chile and arrive at our second campsite, the Chilean Hut, in the shadow of Cerro Marconi Sur and only an hour away from the Southern Patagonian Ice Cap itself. The beautiful position of our camp offers fantastic sunset and sunrise over the Fitz Roy range, Cerro Pier Giorgio, and Gorra Blanca.

7 to 9 hours of walking.

Distance to cover: 10 km (6 miles)

Elevation Gain: 800 meters (2,600 feet)

B, SL, D, Chilean Hut

Day 5 and 6 | Gorra Blanca Ascent

On this day we will attempt an ascent to Gorra Blanca, which rises between the Southern Patagonian Ice Cap to the west and the lush valleys of beech woods and mountain streams to the east. Gorra Blanca stands up as a bastion and is the most identifiable mountain north from Marconi Pass. The climb to the summit is a moderately challenging and extremely interesting ascent, with incredible views the whole way.

Elevation Gain: 1400 meters (4,600 feet)

B, SL, D, Camp

Day 7 | Towards Circo de los Altares

In the morning we will cross Marconi Pass. Here the guide and assistants will use sleds for the first time, carrying most of the general equipment (tents, food, fuel). Only an hour of trekking (with snowshoes, if needed) will bring us into a land of rock and ice. The Patagonian Ice Cap will open itself up, providing fantastic views of the still active Lautaro Volcano, the Mariano Moreno Range (almost as high and much larger than the Fitz Roy Range), the Four Glaciers Pass, and Glacier Chico further south. The rest of the day we will trek on the ice field southbound up to the "Circo De Los Altares" at the foot of the imposing west face of Cerro Torre. We will camp on the ice.

6 hours of walking.

Distance to cover: 12 km (7.5 miles)

Elevation Loss: 100 meters (330 feet)

B, SL, D, Camp Circo de los Altares

Day 8 | From Circo de los Altares to Windy Pass (Paso del Viento)

After staying at the Circo De Los Altares, we trek to Laguna de los Esquies on the lateral moraine of Viedma Glacier; this is where we will exit the ice itself. If the weather and energy of the team permit, we will continue up to the Refuge Paso del Viento.

8 hours of walking.

Distance to cover: 14 km (8.5 miles)

Elevation Loss: 250 meters (820 feet)

Elevation Gain: 250 meters (820 feet)

B, SL, D, Paso del Viento Hut

Day 9 | Weather day

Rest day in the refuge or to be used earlier in the event of bad weather.

Day 10 | Paso del Viento - Paso Huemul

In 2008, after various explorations, we decided to continue the expedition following the Viedma Glacier towards Viedma Lake, instead of climbing Paso del Viento towards El Chaltén. This new route makes the expedition more interesting and attractive, keeping sight of the Southern Patagonian Ice Field and Glacier Viedma for two more days. This part of the expedition follows the Cerro Huemul and surrounds it almost entirely. We'll see Andean steppe, a number of lakes, and a series breathtaking viewpoints as we make our way to Paso Huemul where we will set up camp. From the camp we'll enjoy an impressive aerial view of the glacier flowing into Lago Viedma.

6 to 7 hours of walking. Distance to cover: 8 km (5 miles)

Elevation Gain: 200 meters (650 feet)

Elevation Loss: 100 meters (330 feet)

B, SL, D, Camp Paso Huemul

Day 11 | Paso Huemul - El Chaltén

Trekking down to Viedma Lake and Bahía Cabo de Hornos, we will embark on the boat HUEMUL for our return to Bahía Tunel, which is 30 minutes away from El Chaltén by minibus. At night final dinner with all the staff.

Distance to cover: 5 km (3 miles)

Elevation Loss: 600 meters (1,950 feet)

B, SL, D, Hosteria in El Chaltén, Mountain Guide

Day 12 | Return to El Calafate

Transfer to the bus station, and bus to El Calafate to fly home. (The guide will not accompany the group to El Calafate)

B

Inclusions:

- Mountain guides and assistant from day 3 to 11
- Radio communication with our office in El Chaltén, and G.P.S. (global positioning system).
- Double tents, cooking equipment and utensils.
- Mountain equipment (ropes, harnesses, carabineers, maps, compass, etc.)
- Crampons and technical equipment for the participants.
- Transfer to the bridge over Eléctrico River and back to El Chaltén.
- Boat transfer to Bahía Túnel, and minibus to El Chaltén.
- Accommodation: see itinerary
- Meals: see itinerary for details
 - B: Breakfast
 - SL: Sack Lunch
 - D: Dinner

Exclusions:

- Personal Equipment.
- Transfers in/out El Chaltén.
- Services not mentioned in this program.
- Drinks in restaurants, and extra drinks.
- Tips.