



Patagonia Hiking Adventure

9 Days



Day 1 | Arrival

Due South

Plan to arrive in the world's most southern city, Punta Arenas (PUQ), in the early afternoon. A short transfer will be provided to Hotel Almasur. Conveniently located two blocks from the main square, it's easy to strike off and explore the streets.

There are no scheduled activities this afternoon, but there's lots to see in "Sandy Point." The waterfront promenade is the ideal place to start.

Later, gather in the evening in the hotel lobby for the welcome dinner (at the hotel) for a trip briefing with our Wild Women guide.

Included Meals

Dinner

Accommodations

Hotel Almasur or similar



Day 2 | Isla Magdalena Penguin Reserve

A Knee-High Rookery

We take a short bus ride to the boat dock. As we navigate the dark denim-blue waters of the Strait of Magellan, we may spot austral or piebald dolphins and sei whales en route. We'll also have an uninterrupted view of Contramaestre and Isabel, the islands of Tierra del Fuego. The raucous cormorant and austral seagull colonies and Patagonian sea lions of Marta Island hint at the intimate encounter that lies ahead.

On the windswept expanse of Isla Magdalena, we are instantly charmed by the presence of over 120,000 penguins—it's the second largest Magellanic penguin colony in South America. Standing just 61cm (24 inches) tall, the 6.5 kilo (14.3 pound) Magellanic penguin population is the second largest Magellanic penguin colony in South America. We spend one hour on the island, following a marked trail (and penguins) to the lighthouse built in 1902.

Upon return to shore, we head to Torres del Paine National Park via private shuttle. En route we stop to stretch our legs in Puerto Natales, a small town on the shores of Seno de Ultima Esperanza ("Inlet of Last Hope"). Look for the elegant black-necked swans along the shore! The journey is peppered with sheep herds, gauchos, guanacos, raptors, ostrich-like rhea and the classic Patagonian steppe.

Before dinner, our guide will provide a debrief, instructions and discussion about how to prepare for the W Trek tomorrow. You will be provided with one 20L dry bag which our porters will carry over the course of the next three days on the trek. Tonight we sleep in sustainable style in the EcoCamp domes with wood-fired stoves to keep us cozy. Design inspiration for the dwellings come from the ancient Kaweska tribe and their mantra of “leave no trace.”

Included Meals

Breakfast, boxed lunch and dinner

Accommodations

Suite Domes, EcoCamp Patagonia

Travel

Boat (1 hour, return), private shuttle (5–6 hours)



Day 3 | Hike to Los Cuernos

Peak Moments

Today we will follow the snaking Cuernos Trail that skirts Lake Nordenskjold. On this 7.5 mile (12 km) walk we will have the opportunity to admire the park’s dynamic flora and fauna, the deep lakes and Cuernos del Paine (Paine’s Horns). The black spiked peaks of slate have been

appropriately named the Shark's Fin (Aleta de Tiburón) and the Fortress (Fortaleza). Our guide will point out all the peaks as we picnic.

Our four to five-hour trek will end at Refugio Los Cuernos, a mountain refuge on Lake Nordenskjöld's shores. Depending on our group's pace and the weather, we may opt to stay at Refugio Frances instead. Tonight is all about chilling out and sharing stories and laughs over dinner. An integral part of the W-Trek's atmosphere is mingling with other hikers from around the world in the communal dining and bar area.

Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodations

Refugio Los Cuernos or Refugio Frances (Please note: Our group will stay in shared dorm rooms with six or 12 bunk beds. Every effort will be made to secure rooms just for Wild Women. The refugios are co-ed.)

The Hike

The hike is 7.5 miles (12 km), reaching a maximum altitude of 800 feet (244 m), which takes about 4 to 5 hours depending on our group's pace.



Day 4 | Hike to French Valley

A Time-Carved Landscape

After a nourishing breakfast at Refugio Los Cuernos (or Frances), we begin the challenging trek to Valle Frances (French Valley) along a steep trail into the heart of Paine Massif. There are two options today—we can either hike to the tiptop of the French Valley or take a shorter walk to check out the views from the bottom. We cross the famed suspension bridge over the French River—the reward is an unmatched view of the valley and a big spike of adrenalin!

We continue to ascend towards the upper section of the valley to absorb the extensive mass of the valley's time-carved geological formations: the Hoja (Blade), Máscara (Mask), Espada (Sword), Catedral (Cathedral), Aleta de Tiburón (Shark's Fin) and the magnificent Fortaleza (Fortress).

After our upward trek, we take five and stretch out with a boxed-lunch picnic. After a descent through an undulating terrain of mixed grassland and sparse forest, we reach our basecamp at Refugio Paine Grande. We will spend the night under the roof in bunk beds. Did we mention HOT showers? Refugio Paine Grande is located on the postcard-perfect shores of Lake Pehoé with uninterrupted views of Cuernos del Paine and Cerro Paine Grande.

Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodations

Dorm room bunk beds at Refugio Paine Grande

The Hike

Between 8–16 miles (13–26 km) depending on the route taken, with a maximum altitude of 2,250 feet (686 m)



Day 5 | Paine Grande to Glacier Grey

A Soul-hugging Walk

Today we hike along Lake Pehoé to the northern side of Glacier Grey. The icebergs and crystalline facade of Glacier Grey are a sudden surprise. This 98 foot tall (30 m) glacier is part of the Southern Patagonian Ice Field and measures around 3.7 miles (6 km) wide.

Here, we board a boat to see the glacier up close while clinking drinks chilled by genuine iceberg ice. This super scenic one-hour glacier boat ride will be spent in search of calving glaciers on Lake Grey. Pocketed in the eastern side of Torres Del Paine National Park, the time-carved ice sculptures glint and dazzle in surreal hues of bubbled blue.

We then transfer back to EcoCamp by vehicle. If time and weather permit, we can stop at Salto Grande falls and Mirador Cuernos (“the viewpoint of the horns”). The magnificent Salto Grande waterfall is an impressive cascade as the water thunders from Nordenskjold Lake into Pehoe Lake.

From the falls, it’s a short walk to the dramatic viewpoint of the mighty Horns and blue-as-husky-eyes lake. On this low-key walk through the steppe vegetation we learn about the resilience of the local flora. It’s easy to re-energize while taking in the enormous Paine Mountain range in this soul-hugging region.

Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodations

Suite Domes, EcoCamp Patagonia

Travel

One-hour by boat (Please note: In the event that the glacier tour is canceled due to weather, we will have to hike back to Paine Grande refugio (7 miles/11 km) and take a catamaran to the dock where we will be picked up by our shuttle.)

The Hike

Seven miles (11 km) or approximately 4 hours, with a maximum altitude of 800 feet (244 m)



Day 6 | The Towers

Moving Mountains

Today we leave EcoCamp and head towards Hostería Las Torres before ascending to Ascencio Valley on the looming Tower's eastern face. The trail slips through beech forest and hugs a small silver serpentine river before our biggest challenge—the steep and slippery moraine.

It's a long, slow and steady kind of day as we take on the last section of the famed W trek route. A huge mass of boulders (it feels like a non-stop boulder climb to the top!) lead us to the iconic base view of the three gigantic glacial ice-sheared granite monoliths. The Towers eventually come into full view, rising grandly before us as we follow the winding trail to the pocket glacial lake hidden below.

We take advantage of the vantage point and stretch out with a picnic before backtracking along the same trail to EcoCamp for a well-deserved pisco sour and decadent dinner.

Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodations

Suite Domes, EcoCamp Patagonia

The Hike

14 miles (22 km) or 9–10 hours, with a maximum elevation of 3,000 feet (914 m)



Day 7 | Puma Tracking

The Cat's Meow

Remember the rewards of the Magellanic penguins on Day 2? The early bird gets the worms, penguins and pumas! Our start time (between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m.) will depend on the month and sunrise. We scout areas in the northeast region of the park by vehicle, learning about puma behavior and movement. Traveling predominantly by vehicle, but if our guide sees an opportunity, we may follow tracks on foot.

Around noon, we return to EcoCamp for a lingering lunch together. An optional puma tracking session will begin around 4 p.m. when pumas (and humans) are known to be more active. You may choose to remain at EcoCamp and unwind with a complimentary yoga, meditation or sound therapy session. A massage therapist is also available (this is an additional expense).

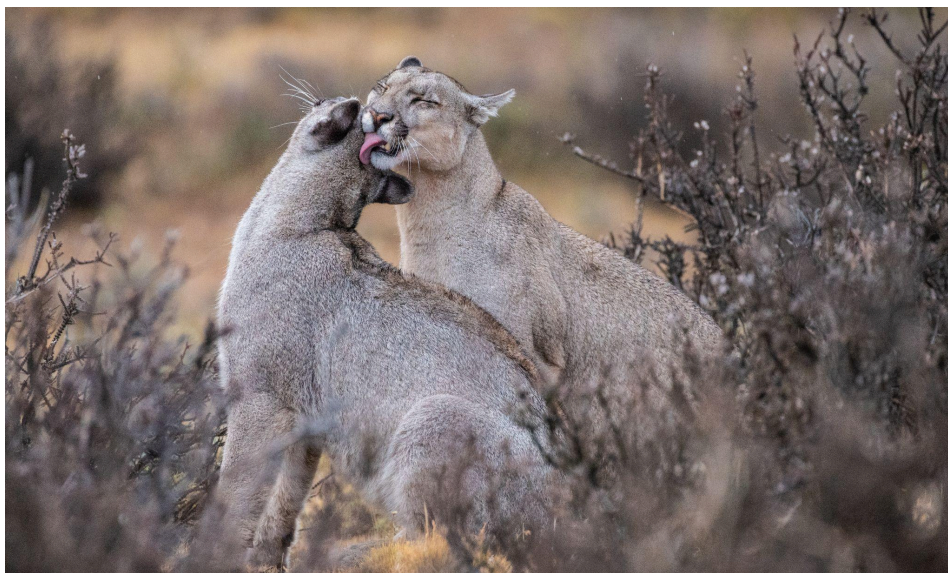
The stealth puma trackers will return around 8:30 p.m. Dinner may be together or separate for those who wish to eat earlier. Then, it's time to return to our domes to stoke the fire and pack!

Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

Accommodations

Suite Domes, EcoCamp Patagonia



Day 8 | Estancia Dos Elianas

Counting Sheep

After one last awesome EcoCamp breakfast, we head to the rustic Estancia Dos Elianas to learn about the deep traditions of ranch life. In the livestock area, we visit the corrals, shearing sheds, mangers and displays of vintage tools and antiques of the generational farm. Around noon, we pull up seats to a classic Patagonian BBQ.

The *arrieros* (muleteers) will be in full action, tending to their flock on horseback and later, shearing a sheep. We also learn about the gaucho's most loyal companion, the sheepdog, through demonstrations of the dog's skills in herding and working in the corrals with both sheep and cows. Our visit is capped with a local favorite: savory *sopaipillas* (fried bread) served with jam and cheese.

We stop at EcoCamp headquarters in Puerto Natales before carrying on to our hotel. Our farewell dinner (sigh) will be at a popular local restaurant which we will walk to with a casual historical city tour along the way.

Included Meals

Breakfast, Patagonian BBQ and dinner

Accommodations

Hotel Almasur or similar

Travel

Private shuttle (5–6 hours)



Day 9 | Adios Patagonia

W Trek: Check!

After breakfast at the hotel (at your leisure, within the hotel's breakfast hours) a group shuttle will be provided in the morning to the Punta Arenas airport for those who are flying to Santiago and onward. Swap stories, Airdrop iPhone pics and trade contact info with your fellow Wild Women—most importantly, decide where next!

You may choose to spend a few more nights in Punta Arenas to take advantage of a guided sail to Cape Froward, join a local whale watching excursion or see the King penguins on a Tierra del Fuego tour!

Included Meals

Breakfast



Itinerary version as of March 15, 2024.