

Patagonia & Chilean Fjords

Ushuaia, Argentina, South America to Puerto Montt, Chile, South America (PCF)

Day 1 Arrive Ushuaia

Arrive in Ushuaia, where you will be met by a representative of Aurora Expeditions and transferred with your fellow expeditioners to your assigned pre-voyage hotel. If you are already in Ushuaia, we ask you to make your way to your hotel. Check-in is from 3.00 pm. This afternoon, visit the Aurora Expeditions hospitality desk in the hotel lobby, between 3.00 pm and 7.00 pm, to collect your luggage tags, and confirm if you wish to join our Lake Escondido pre-embarkation tour tomorrow. Our team will confirm details regarding your embarkation day, answer any questions and provide you with information on where to dine or purchase last minute items. Expeditioners arriving after 7.00 pm will find a welcome pack waiting for them at check-in. We ask you to visit our hospitality desk tomorrow between 8.00 am – 10.00 am. The remainder of your time is at leisure. All meals today are at your own expense. Assigned accommodation: Las Hayas Ushuaia Resort



Day 2 Embarkation Day

This morning, enjoy breakfast and check-out. Please ensure your cabin luggage is fitted with cabin tags clearly labelled with your name and cabin number. Take your cabin luggage to hotel reception, prior to, or at check-out. Your luggage will be stored and transferred directly to the port for clearance, to be placed in your cabin ahead of your arrival on board. Please keep any valuables or personal items with you throughout the day. Your morning is at leisure to explore Ushuaia. Those wishing to join our Lake Escondido tour today, please meet in the hotel lobby at 8.45 am. This tour offers us an unforgettable panoramic drive through big valleys of glacial origin, evergreen and deciduous forests, waterfalls and rivers, in the vastness of the Andes Mountain Range. We will leave Ushuaia city to the northeast of Tierra del Fuego, driving through peat bog valleys to reach Garibaldi Pass, only accessible by a winding road that will take us to a panoramic point. From here we will have amazing panoramic views of Lake Escondido and, if weather conditions allow, of Fagnano Lake. We will start our descent towards the northeast to reach Fagnano Lake's shore where we will visit a local ranch. After appreciating the landscape, you will have the chance to enjoy the typical Fuegian Lamb barbecue. Enjoy some free time there before returning to Ushuaia for ship embarkation. Alternatively, enjoy your day at leisure and meet at your hotel lobby at 3.00 pm, or 3.30 pm from the meeting point at the parking lot near the pier (details will be given by our ground staff at the hotel), to be transferred to the pier for embarkation. Once onboard, you'll have time to settle into your cabin before our important mandatory briefings. As the ship pulls away from port, we'll gather on the deck to commence our adventure with spectacular views over Ushuaia and Tierra del Fuego. This evening get to know your fellow expeditioners and friendly expedition team and crew at a welcome dinner to celebrate the start of a thrilling adventure to Antarctica.

Day 3 Cape Horn

Located on Hornos Island in the Tierra del Fuego archipelago lies Cape Horn, near the southernmost point in South America. Until the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914, ships had to sail round Cape Horn to travel between the east and west coast of South America—a hazardous endeavour due to the strong winds and current, large powerful waves and occasional icebergs. These days, Cape Horn attracts adventurous travellers—mostly from expedition cruise ships, who go ashore and hike to the landmark lighthouse known as 'Stella Maris Chapel.' At the top of the hill, you can enjoy panoramic views of where the Pacific and Atlantic oceans meet and feel the incredible power of nature as these two mighty oceans squeeze through the Drake Passage.

Days 4-5 Beagle Channel & Glacier Alley

As we re-enter the Beagle Channel, an important waterway that allowed ships to avoid the notoriously rough waters around Cape Horn, we follow the route that a young Charles Darwin took on board the famous HMS Beagle back in 1831, a five-year expedition that forever changed his life and which led him to develop his seminal theory of evolution. Sailing west past Ushuaia, you travel through a dazzling stretch of the 240-kilometre (150 mile) long Beagle Channel called Glacier Alley or 'Avenue of the Glaciers' as it's more elegantly known. You will marvel at this string of tidewater glaciers pushing down to the edge of the sea from the enormous Darwin Ice Field. Surrounded by snow-capped peaks, most of the glaciers were named after European countries or the explorers who discovered them: Holland, Italy, Romanche, Spain, Garibaldi. Weather permitting, we'll board our Zodiacs for a closer look at the impressive Romanche Glacier. Even if fog obscures the view, the sound of the cracking ice as it calves into the water is sure to impress. Apart from the spectacular scenery, Glacier Alley offers opportunities to spot wildlife such as penguin rookeries and South American fur seals.

Day 6 Francisco Coloane Marine Reserve

Established in 2003 as Chile's first marine reserve, Francisco Coloane was the first known feeding ground for humpback whales along the Pacific coast of South America. The park honours Francisco Coloane, a celebrated Chilean author who wrote many stories of ocean adventures about Patagonia and Antarctica. Coloane was himself an adventurer, explorer and son of a whaler. Around the southern area of Santa Ines Island, surrounded by spectacular views including the tidewater glacier pushing down the rugged mountainous island, we spend time kayaking and Zodiac cruising, getting a close look at Magellanic penguins, imperial cormorants, flightless steamer ducks, and southern fur seals. Around Carlos III Island, a known feeding ground for the humpback whales, we hope to see the majestic creatures from the comfort of our ship, or if conditions permit, from our kayaks or Zodiacs.

Day 7 Chilean Fjord, White Narrows

As we venture north, we enter one of the many channels and fjords of Patagonian Chile. Be prepared to experience wild weather. The fjords and islands of Chilean Patagonia take the brunt of the prevailing westerlies that blow across the southern seas, and here, the wind can blow almost constantly, and rain and snow can fall all year round. We may sail through Montañas Fjord, a long fjord flanked by rugged mountains and a number of glaciers including Herman, Bernal, and Paredes. At low tide this evening, we cross the White Narrows – a narrow channel of water approximately 80 metres wide. Find a spot on one of our many observation areas and appreciate the masterful skills of our Captain as they navigate us through this difficult channel. At the heart of Chilean Patagonia lies Bernardo O'Higgins National Park. More than 320 kilometres (200 miles) from one end to the other, the park encompasses Patagonia's Southern Ice Field, which in combination with its northern counterpart forms one of the largest expanses of glacial ice outside the Polar Regions.

Days 8-9 Puerto Natales / Torres del Paine National Park, Kirke Narrows

Puerto Natales is the gateway to Torres del Paine National Park, world-renowned for its granite towers, which give the park its name. These gigantic spires were carved by glacial ice and upon entering the park, you will see a series of lakes with intense colours, mountains covered in ice, and an array of local fauna. In Patagonia, you will feel the immensity of nature and delight in feeling completely insignificant in its presence. The jaw-dropping landscapes of turquoise waters, glaciers and towering granite horns of the Torres del Paine National Park is a humbling experience. You will have two days to experience the wonders of Torres del Paine National Park on various hikes suited to your fitness level. You will pass several estancias (ranches) en route to the national park, and you will witness the landscape change from a steppe eco-region to deciduous forest. Along the way, pause amongst the mountains to admire views of the lakes called Amarga, Sarmiento, and Nordenskjold, and Salto Grande. You may be able to see some of the local fauna, including many species of birds including the majestic condor. Look out for foxes, huemul (Andean deer) and guanacos, which are wild camelids related to the llama. The reclusive difficult-to-spot puma has also been seen inside the national park where authorities are happy to report a healthy growing population. We spend the night at a comfortable hotel located just outside of the national park offering superb mountain and river views. Here you will enjoy local cuisine and Chilean wine and hear about the various hiking options available to you and suited to your individual interests and fitness level. On the afternoon of your second day in Torres del Paine National Park, you will be transported back to the vessel in time for dinner, swapping stories on the drive back, of your exploration of the park. Later this evening, enjoy the crossing of the Kirke Narrows. From the observation areas, it's an ideal opportunity to watch the scenery unfold as you sail through this beautiful channel. Enjoy informative and entertaining presentations from our hand-selected expedition team, who will bring to life the natural environment, wildlife, culture and history of the places you'll be experiencing. You can choose from one of the following three itineraries to suit your fitness levels: Easy, Medium, and Difficult

Day One in Torres del Paine National Park

Easy option- minimal walking required with visits to the national park's most impressive lookouts, shorter days

Highlights include: Sarmiento Lake viewpoint Laguna Amarga lookout Nordenskjold Lake lookout Salto Grande lookout Lunch at Pehoe Lake End the day at Villa Serrano to check-in to your hotel for the evening

Medium option – easy treks of up to 14 km (8.7 mi) per day Lazo-Weber trek, stopping for lunch during the trek. The trek is not difficult but it is long in distance. We recommend walking poles for this trek. End the day at Villa Serrano to check-in to your hotel for the evening

Difficult option – longer and more challenging treks of up to 22 km (13.7 mi) per day

Highlights include: Fauna Trail from

Sarmiento to Amarga Salto Grande + Mirador Cuernos Lunch at Pehoe Lake C ndor lookout End the day at Villa Serrano to check-in to your hotel for the evening Today's itinerary consists of three short treks, which combined makes for a long, challenging and rewarding day. Accommodation: Hotel Rio Serrano (or similar) Day Two in Torres del Paine National Park Easy option Depart from Villa Serrano. Visit Cascada del R o Paine and Laguna Azul. Stop at Cerro Castillo on our drive back to Puerto Natales to rejoin the ship. Medium option Today's itinerary consists of two short treks of up to 6 km (3.7 mi) each. Highlights include: Salto Grande + Mirador Cuernos Nordenskjold Lake lookout Fauna Trail from Sarmiento to Amarga Laguna Amarga lookout Drive back to Puerto Natales to rejoin the ship Difficult option Las Torres Base trek - up to 20 km (12.5 mi) You will explore the Ascencio Valley, walking through a beautiful Lenga forest and getting up close to the astounding Torres del Paine viewpoint. Throughout the trek you will walk through forests, along streams and across glacier moraines. Drive back to Puerto Natales to rejoin the ship.

Days 10-11 PIO XI Glacier, Puerto Eden

This afternoon, a maze of fjords ultimately leads us to the entrance of Pío XI, named in honour of Pope Pius XI by Father Alberto de Agostini, an Italian missionary and explorer, who in 1931 was the first person to cross the Southern Ice Field. Of the 48 glaciers in the Southern Ice Field, nearly all are retreating, except Pío XI. Scientists have not been able to explain exactly why it has advanced so far and so fast over the past 80 years. In any case, Pío XI Glacier is an anomaly in a world where nearly all glaciers are retreating and being able to see it up close is a privilege. We head to Puerto Eden on our journey northwards, navigating more challenging passages including Paso del Abismo, a very narrow and spectacular channel where you can continue to enjoy remarkable scenery. Located on the east coast of Wellington Island, inside Bernardo O'Higgins National Park, Puerto Eden is a tiny fishing village connected by intricate canals, imposing mountains, icefields, and is considered one of Chile's most isolated inhabited places. The village is known for being the home to approximately 25 Kawésqar indigenous inhabitants – roughly 10% of the population of the village. The village is connected by beautiful timber boardwalks called 'pasarelas'. Kawésqar are traditionally nomadic sea people and it comes as no surprise that the main economic activity is fishing - mussels being a local speciality. Known for their excellent craftsmanship for canoe-making and basketry, local handicrafts are also a speciality, and you'll have ample opportunity to meet the locals and to purchase locally made handicrafts directly from them. You'll enjoy exploring the picturesque boardwalks over the maze of canals, meeting the friendly locals, and soaking in the tranquil natural beauty of this isolated hamlet.

Day 12 Chilean Fjords

Leaving Puerto Eden behind, we re-enter the channels for a few days navigating our way through Patagonia's maze of fjords towards Chiloé. Our team of experts will continue to deliver informative and entertaining presentations in the lecture theatre or, you may choose to enjoy a book from our library or stay active in the fitness centre. Spend time on the decks to scan for whales, dolphins and seabirds, while admiring the beautiful landscapes of the maze of channels and islands around. We will be sailing along part of the 145 km / 90-mile long Moraleda Channel, which separates the mainland from the huge archipelagos of Chonos and Guaitecas. To the east we will see magnificent Andes peaks such as the Mentolat, Melimoyu and the Maca volcanoes. We will be scanning the waters for the occasional presence of pods of killer whale that predate on the numerous South American sea lion colonies located along the coast and forested islands.

Day 13 Corcovado Gulf, Tic Toc Bay

Spend the morning exploring the delightful and impressive coastline of Tic Toc Bay – either ship cruising or perhaps by Zodiac and kayak. This whole area has been recently recognised as one of the few marine parks of Chile famous not only for the seasonal presence of blue whales but also for the rich array of other cetaceans, marine mammals, and seabirds. In the Corcovado Gulf, you will enjoy spotting a good variety of seabirds including black-browed albatross, southern giant petrel, southern fulmar and long-distant migrants such as the migratory Arctic skua. Continue to keep watch for whales in the Corcovado Gulf as we sail into Chiloé, an archipelago of lush islands, a land of myths and legends, unique folklore and culinary traditions. It's a region blessed with natural beauty and culture, cherished by Chileans. Explore this mythical island with its colourful timber churches, sixteen of which have been declared World Heritage Sites by UNESCO.

Day 14 Castro, Chonchi, Chiloé National Park

Continue to Castro, the charming capital of Chiloé region. Here you have a choice of one of the following two shore excursion options. Option 1 - Castro and Chonchi (5 hours) Discover the main attractions of Castro town including palafittes (houses on stilts), museums, churches and the handicraft market. You will then visit the beautiful renowned churches of the area recognised by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites. Continue to Chonchi, nicknamed the "city of three floors" for its terraces, with important sites such as the Museum of Traditions, Accordion Museum and its attractive waterfront. For lunch, savour the taste of the region's fresh produce before returning to Castro for some free time. Option 2 - Chiloé National Park (6.5 hours) This excursion takes you through the pristine natural landscapes that amazed Charles Darwin during his explorations of the Huillinco and Cucao Lakes and Pacific Ocean. At Chiloé National Park visit the interpretation centre, walk along lovely "Sendero el Tepual" a pathway that winds through Chiloé's thick and humid forest. After the walk, it's time to relax and enjoy lunch, where you will savour the flavours of the region's produce, before returning to Castro for some free time. This evening, enjoy Captain's Cocktail Party and Farewell Dinner to celebrate the end of a memorable adventure in this magical part of the world.

Day 15 Puerto Montt

Our voyage ends In Puerto Montt. Farewell your expedition team and fellow adventurers before transferring to the airport for your onward travels. Note: At the conclusion of the voyage, we do not recommend booking flights departing Puerto Montt prior to 11.00 am on the day of disembarkation in case there are delays.