

American Alpine Institute -Program Itinerary- 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.

(Passengers will take a cab by their selves to go to the hotel)
Hotel in El Calafate.

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

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(Optional visit to Perito Moreno Balconies: We will make an excursion today to one of the most famous geological sights in the world, the Perito Moreno glacier, at the far end of the lake, 75 km from El Calafate. It is also protected by the World Biosphere Reserve from United Nations Education and Culture (UNESCO) Perito Moreno is one of the few glaciers that are stable, with seasonal fluctuations in the position of its snout. It calves into Lake Argentino and sometimes the terminus creates a natural dam and part of the lake becomes landlocked. The water level rises until it suddenly breaks the ice dam and bursts. Every so often it is possible to see huge lumps of ice break off and fall into the lake to float away as icebergs) In the afternoon we will take a bus to El Chaltén (passengers will have to make their own arrangements to get to the bus station, which is downtown)

B, Hotel in El Chaltén.

Day 3 | El Chaltén – La Playita

Today we will meet our Guide and we will have a briefing of the expedition and will check our equipment. Then a private transfer will drive us to Electrico River Bridge, 15 KM 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 (types of trees), which is up the Electrico River. At the end of the vegetation we will pass through 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 Treinta Aniversario, Marconi South, and North Peaks. From Piedra Fraile, we will follow the southern shore of Electrico Lake, crossing moraines and rocky formations abandoned by the glacier less than 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. 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 might have some energy left to explore the area. 6 hours of walking approximately.

Distance to cover: 12 KM

Elevation Gain: 50 meters

B, BL, D, Camp La Playita

Day 4 | Marconi Pass

We will wake up at dawn, to start our daily routine of the expedition: breakfast, packing up of camp, and trekking. Only 20 minutes of walking will bring us in front of the Marconi Glacier. A gigantic moraine is our first obstacle

- the terrain here is unstable and moves constantly, impeding 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 might be the toughest day of the expedition. We will climb 800 meters on ice and snow using crampons and navigate around crevasses with the assistance of the guide and his team

(ropes may be used if necessary). Marconi Glacier forms a pass that creates a bottleneck effect with the winds coming from the ice field and the Pacific Ocean. Hence, participants will need to be both physically and mentally prepared to trek in rain or snow. At the end of the day, we will arrive at our second campsite, in the shadow of Cerro Marconi Sur and only an hour away from the Southern Patagonian Ice Field itself. Our almost surreal campsite 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

Elevation Gain: 800 meters

B, BL, D, Chilean Hut

Day 5 and 6 | Gorra Blanca Ascent

If weather is fine, we will attempt an ascent to Gorra Blanca. Gorra Blanca (2907 m) is a real limit between the Southern Patagonian Ice Field and the valleys with beech woods and mountain rivers. Gorra Blanca stands up as a bastion and is the most identifiable mountain north from Marconi Pass. It is a technical and of a high physical demand glacier ascent.

Elevation Gain: 1400 meters
B, BL, 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

Last year, 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