

Patagonia Mountains & Sea



All photos by L. Ingram

Los Glaciares, Perito Moreno, & Patagonia Austral National Parks

November 25 – December 5, 2012

walk a ruggedly beautiful coastline inhabited by penguins, sea lions, and seabird colonies... follow an old cattle trail through wildflower carpeted uplands... explore colorful beech forests...and hike into the Andes Mountains where condors sweep out of the canyons and circle overhead!

These exciting experiences are planned, but the CNT philosophy allows time to discover the awesome beauty of Patagonia on your own as well. Free time at each location provides an opportunity to choose your own special adventure. Lodging is ruggedly elegant; dining includes the familiar and the exotic - and all of it exceptional. Dress is always casual, coffee and tea are always ready for you in the morning.

Itinerary

Day 1: Depart

Day 2: Upon arrival clear customs. Proceed directly to your domestic flight to the Patagonia Coast. Arrive in time for dinner and a briefing on the days ahead.

Days 1-4: Bahía Bustamante, Patagonia Austral NP

Bahía Bustamante is a seaside property with its own village entirely surrounded by nature. Patagonia Austral NP was created in entirety from estancia land in 2009. It is located on the northern arch of San Jorge Gulf, an area characterised by its important biodiversity. There are few places in the world that house such a number and diversity of seabirds and marine mammals. Bahía Bustamante stands out because of its exquisite natural environment. Since 1952, the Estancia/village has been exclusively devoted to the harvesting of seaweed. In the early days 500 people lived there. They used wagons pulled by horses to collect the crops. Today some 40 inhabitants live in Bahía Bustamante all of whom are devoted to seaweed production, which makes this place world's unique "seaweed village".

Marine Fauna: Sea lion (*Otaria Flavescens*) colonies on the islands, numbering around 3,500 animals, are an important component of the total population of central Patagonia, making up about 20% of the total number living and breeding in the San Jorge Gulf area. The Magellan Penguin (*Spheniscus magellanicus*) colony, which totals about 60,000 animals, is truly large, and is one of the main tourist attractions of Chubut province. You will also find colonies of a varied number of birds, including cormorants, ducks, herons, gulls, terns, petrels, skuas, among many others. The richness of the area also attracts the presence of killer whales, dolphins and the lovely black and white Commerson's dolphins. Also, on their way from or to Valdes Peninsula, a Southern Right Whale or an Elephant Seal may pay a visit.

Steppe Fauna: Going around the area, you will be surprised to see all kinds of regional animals that live in the Patagonian steppe. Maras, lesser rheas and guanacos usually cross the traveler's path and, occasionally, some restless armadillo or skunk may wander out of a thorny bush. The sunset is the best moment to watch a great variety of birds and the diminutive grey fox.

Birds: The coast of Bahía Bustamante and Malaspina Cove has the greatest diversity of seabirds in all Patagonia. There are 21 breeding colonies harboring from one to seven seabird species. The islands and islets of this region, noted for their diversity of flora, and the richness of the marine fauna, create ideal conditions for the seabirds to reproduce.

Their colonies are sheltered from the wind, the swell, and land predators. Apart from marine birds, several coastal birds come to this place to breed, feed and rest during their migration. Seven migratory, five nearctic, and two Patagonian species frequent the area. It is also possible to see a great variety of steppe birds.

The **Peninsula Gravina** has thin sandy beaches sheltered from the wind by large red rocks that contrast with the intense blue of the sea. There are cemeteries of native population on the Peninsula. At low tide, natural bowls form in the rocks. They are ideal places to swim in the warm summer afternoons. You can visit the Peninsula on bikes, horsebacks or mini-van. During these rides, you will be able to see a wide variety of birds.

For sailing along **Malaspina Cove**, visiting Sea Lion and Seabird colonies, we first gather at the grocery store and assess the weather report and the tide tables to determine whether sailing is possible. We board the catamaran and sail along the seaweed fields where we may come across vessels working the seaweed

harvest. Later we sail on the mussel crops and tell you all about the breeding online system we use. Finally we come near the islands that are within the cove, approach the Roca Malaspina to continue sailing down the archipelago made up by the Vernacci Islands. While sailing, we can view sea lion colonies (3,500 animals during the breeding season), penguins (60,000) and colourful marine bird colonies. Then we moor the boat and return to the village.



We take internal tracks within our private land reserve driving almost 18 miles (30 km) till we arrive at the **Petrified Forest**. This place tells how it looked some 60 million years ago, during what we identify as the Paleocene Epoch, during the early Tertiary Period (i.e. the Age of Mammals). Dinosaurs and other species had disappeared from the face of the earth a few million years before, but life still went on with new specimens and scenarios. In this era, the sea advanced from the Atlantic and covered the San Jorge Gulf area. This formed a bay that extended beyond Small River, and made Camarones emerge as an island. On the continent, life developed generously. Forests covered most of the Patagonian region and the weather was mild with plenty of rainfall and moderate temperatures. As the Andes were still in formation, there wasn't – as there is today- a natural barrier to stop humid winds that come from the Pacific. Volcanoes were very active at the time, and the wind covered most of Patagonia with humidity and volcanic ashes. Bahía Bustamante offers you the opportunity to discover the remaining fossils of these forests, huge petrified tree trunks that have become rock with its characteristic glow of opal, which has replaced the tree's original organic matter. You can appreciate tree rings, traces of bark and many other features.

Day 5: Depart after breakfast traveling inland to the local airport for our flight south.

Days 5-8: Perito Moreno NP & Los Glaciares NP

We arrive in El Calafate. Founded in 1927 the city takes its name from the abundant thorny shrub in the southernmost area of Argentina's Patagonia. Initially, the Tehuelche Indians lived in El Calafate taking refuge in the leafy forests and subsisting through the cold winters by using this bush as firewood. The **Perito Moreno Glacier** owes its popularity to the continuous movement of its ice mass. Massive blocks of ice fracture and break off its front, which is 5

kilometers wide and 60 meters above the lake level. This gigantic glacier is one of the few on earth that is not shrinking in size.

The layout of this wild and difficult terrain makes **Los Glaciares NP** one of the most unusual National Parks in the world. It forms part of the Patagonian Continental Ice Field from which 13 glaciers descend on the Atlantic side to flow into the Viedma and Argentino Lakes. It has been declared a part of the Natural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. In the northern area of the park lies a mountain range where the highest peaks, Mt Fitz Roy (3,405 meters) and Mt Torre (3,128 meters) boast the greatest diversity of granite in the Andes.

Estancia Helsingfors was founded at the turn of this century by pioneer Alfred Ramström, a Finnish adventurer who adopted southern Patagonia as his home. He settled at the foot of the Andes range, on the south-western coast of Lake Viedma, with an imposing view of the legendary Fitz Roy peak, christening his estancia with the name of the capital of Finland, Helsingfors (or Helsinki in Swedish), in memory of his motherland. The thick evergreen forests of *Helsingfors* can be seen from afar as one approaches the ranch. Majestic glaciers, hidden lagoons, the immensity of Lake Viedma, and the majestic and imposing backdrop of the fabled Fitz Roy, also known as Chaltén by the Tehuelche Indians, is a paradise for the explorer. It is formed by a chain of granite spires and is the dream of all mountain climbers. Once private, the estancia is now entirely within Los Glaciares NP and operates exclusively as a lodge.

Our activities may include - sailing on the **Viedma Lake** and sighting the imposing cascade amphitheatre, a narrow cove surrounded by cliffs with a pretty waterfall; Morro Lagoon (20 minute navigation), and an excursion to Moyano Sound; 40 minute navigation to the SW end of Moyano Arm, followed by a three hour walk through a dreamlike forest reaching the beautiful Green Lake and the amazing view of the Moyano Glacier. Other options are a hike to the **Blue Lagoon**. A splendid landscape appears when you reach the beautiful Blue Lagoon, fed by a glacier and framed by snow-capped peaks. You are surrounded by indigenous flora; beautiful trees as the red notros, lengas, guindos and chauras. Wildlife to watch for includes guanacos, eagles, condors, black-neck swans, flamingos, wild geese, huemules (an endangered species of indigenous deer that inhabit the forests of the Patagonian Andes), pumas, wildcats, Patagonian and European hare.

Birdwatching at the Estancia and its surroundings offers a wide variety - almost 70 species have been seen and identified including: Patagonian Mockingbird; Long Tailed Meadowlark, White Throated Caracara, Andean Condor; Great Horned Owl.

Days 9-10: Buenos Aires

You have a brief visit to this cosmopolitan city of European heritage neighborhoods. Extend your stay and enjoy the urban experience. There is even an Ecological Reserve within city limits.

Day 10: Early evening transfer to the airport for the flight home.

Day 11: Arrive home.



Trip Information

Trip Cost: \$4895

\$500 deposit secures your space. Sorry, checks only accepted for payment. Trip cost based on maximum of 10 participants; adjusted increase may apply with fewer participants.

Included:

- All scheduled ground transportation in-country
- All lodging in private rooms or cottages with private bath
- All meals
- All scheduled group excursions including local guide service
- All tipping to drivers and guides
- All taxes and service charges
- Pre-departure information packet
- Ceiba Nature Tours and local staff/guides throughout tour

Not Included:

- International and regional airfare
- Personal items; laundry, food and drinks not provided at meals
- Airport departure taxes (may be included in your airfare)

Payment/Refund Schedule: Final payment is due 90 days prior to trip departure. A full refund will be given up to 90 days prior to the date of departure.

Flight: You may choose to arrive earlier and/or depart later than the selected 'group' flight, but must coordinate with the group at our stated arrival and departure times; if not you will be responsible for transportation costs to join the group in progress. If desired, I will book your flight.

Passport: It is required that your passport be valid for 6 months beyond return date. Airline counter personal in the country of origin are responsible for enforcing entrance requirements. Although they may still occasionally be lax, if you do not have a passport that is valid for at least 6 months after your date of travel, it is highly probable that they will not let you board the plane.

Health and Safety: Every effort is made to prevent accidents and ensure safety. Participants must assume full responsibility for their own safety and

provide their own medical and accident insurance. Consult your family physician or travel immunization center regarding health concerns and recommended immunizations for travel. You should be able to negotiate steps, walk on rocky trails, and climb in and out of vehicles with assistance. Medical services or facilities may not be available during all or part of your trip. The purchase of trip cancellation and medical insurance is strongly advised. Smoking Policy: permitted only in designated and/or outdoor areas.

Insurance: CNT recommends trip insurance including cancellation, delay, and medical coverage. Most trip insurance policies waive pre-existing conditions if trip insurance is purchased within 15 days of receipt of registration and trip deposit. Information on trip insurance will be provided upon receipt of deposit.

Expectations of Participants: Please keep in mind that the very nature of our tour has us in out-of-the-way places. This means walking trails might be rough and roads bumpy. Conditions may not be the same as in the United States. Accommodations will be wonderfully pleasant, but service is at the pace of local custom. Please leave your country with the attitude that you are travelling to experience another.

Questions Please call Linda Ingram, 1-877-626-2456, or info@ceibanaturetours.com

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Meet the Tour Leaders

Linda M. Ingram, Ceiba Nature Tours owner/operator has twenty-three years experience as an environmental educator and manager for Pennsylvania State Parks. A life-long interest in the environment and experiencing other cultures created a strong desire to travel. While interested in all places on the planet, the new world tropics and inherent wildlife remain her passion! Hometown is Douglassville Pennsylvania where every summer she works to create a lush but brief tropical landscape. Linda accompanies each and every tour.

Diego Gallegos, your local guide in Argentina.

In 1973, when I was 12, W. H. Hudson's delightful "Far Away and Long Ago" fell into my hands. The birds, the nature and the people in those pristine pampas of 1850 were depicted so vividly that I was forever hooked. I worked many years as the manager of the birding conservation group Asociación Ornitológica del Plata (at present known as Aves Argentinas). Since then, I led many other groups from the USA, UK or Europe.

Married to a biology teacher, we live with our four kids in a northern suburb of Buenos Aires. We spend much of our spare time in the countryside and we take every opportunity to travel around Argentina. Despite the long time I have been guiding, I keep having the same fun I had when I guided my first group. And I love to share that joy.