

## FAQs (Direct)

### In Preparation / Clients suitability for the trip.

Patagonia is a beautiful, wild and unpredictable part of our planet. For lovers of the outdoors who are used to coping with the challenges of travelling in remote areas (and who have a keen sense of adventure and a flexible attitude) the rewards are plentiful and memorable. Their companion and guide is an experienced leader.

*All of our guides have worked in the area and are experienced, knowledgeable, safety conscience individuals who are passionate about what they do.*

Groups are limited to between 2 and 10 guests.

All the trips are escorted throughout. Our camping trips are fully supported with meals being prepared for guests and luggage being carried in a support vehicle.

Our campsites are all chosen for their location and views. We try to avoid high traffic areas and use locally run estancias and hotels wherever possible.

Due to the risk of fires, campfires are strictly prohibited, apart from the dedicated areas. We are in support of this policy. On non-camping trips we select hotels, refugios and estancias based on their location, service and comfort. We are constantly monitoring these establishments to ensure our standards are met. Where this is not the case, we are prompt to act and resolve the issue with the owners or if this is not possible, alter our itinerary.

On camping trips guests typically set up their own tents although, on some days, guests may be surprised when they arrive at the camp and their tent is all ready! This depends on the timing and is more likely on the longer riding days. On the days when guests set up their own tents help is always on hand.

Challenges worthy of a mention:

1. The roads are mostly unpaved and some are dusty and bumpy. In addition, the distances between sites can be great. Few of the roads in the park are paved though the road between Puerto Natales and Cerro Castillo is now fully paved.
2. The weather can be notoriously unkind, wet, cloudy and closed-in (a pain for visibility). It can also be extremely windy (and people often get blown off their feet literally and parked vehicles over-turned in very extreme wind). Luckily it doesn't tend to stay too wet for too long but clients need to be prepared for the conditions both physically and mentally.
3. Itineraries need to be flexible. Occasionally they will have to be adjusted to maintain the safety of the group. It is also important to note that if rivers are too high to cross (either in vehicle or horseback) then this will affect the itinerary.

### Note on Travel Insurance

It is a **condition of clients' booking** that they have adequate travel insurance in place before joining one of the trips. By adequate, we mean that it will specifically cover horse riding as this is usually deemed as a dangerous sport and requires a special insurance. It is also essential that they have cover in place for emergency evacuation and medical treatment. We will require proof of this for all bookings and will not be able to accept uninsured clients on any trips.

### Arriving:

All our trips are run for a specified number of days and our meeting/drop off point is Puerto Natales in Southern Chile. For clients needing help on arrival in Puerto Natales please see the **Additional Options PDF**, for the buses and private transfers available and accommodation in Punta Arenas. The **Bus Schedule PDF** gives bus timetables to and from Punta Arenas. For clients arriving from a different place please let us know and we will make the necessary enquiries so that they can arrive easily in Puerto Natales.

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For clients wanting to upgrade to a more luxurious hotel there are plenty of choices. These vary in price from \$200 per night for a double room. We are happy to advise on accommodation in Punta Arenas and El Calafate and can make reservations on behalf of our clients. In some cases, we may request the clients credit card number to secure the booking.

Once everybody has arrived in Puerto Natales, the group goes out for a meal and the guide gives the client's a full briefing on the days ahead. Please inform your clients that the guide will circulate our riding safety briefing at the welcome dinner. Those clients will need to sign a form to confirm that they have read and understood the contents of this briefing (available in English, Spanish and French on request).

All our trips are guided from start to finish by an experienced leader as stated above. He/she will be joined by local horsemen (baqueanos). Transport is contracted with a local and reliable operator, who is safety checked.

The penguins are no longer a part of the riding trips. Clients who want to see them will need to arrange for a private transfer either on the way to Puerto Natales from Punta Arenas or vice versa. We can help organise this. The price is on the **Additional Options PDF**. Please note there are very few penguins after March, please advise anyone interested to come before then!

### Extra Hotel Nights:

Where clients are arriving early or departing late, we are happy to arrange extra hotel accommodation in either Punta Arenas, Puerto Natales, Santiago, El Calafate or elsewhere. We can also book extra, one-off excursions such as visits to Perito Moreno Glacier, City Tours, Boat trips or any other excursion. Prices on request.

### Late Arrivals & Emergency Contact:

If a client is delayed on their arrival to Puerto Natales they should call on 9 7731 8157 from a Chilean land line or 77318157 from a Chilean cell phone. If they have email access they should also send an email to [info@horseridingpatagonia.com](mailto:info@horseridingpatagonia.com)

*Note: Please be aware that if for any reason clients do not arrive at the specified meeting point in time to start their trip we are not responsible and cannot pick up the bill for the extra transfers, lost activity days, hotel nights, or extra meals that may be required as a result of the delay. Of course, we will do everything in our power to accommodate late clients and make the necessary arrangements for them to reach the trip as planned but we will need to invoice for the costs involved in this.*

If agents receive any messages from friends or family which they would like relayed to clients in the park they should contact Victoria by email on [info@horseridingpatagonia.com](mailto:info@horseridingpatagonia.com). Emails are frequently checked throughout the day and any urgent messages can be relayed to the clients as soon as possible (normally by radio). Alternatively agents can call direct on +56 9 7731 8157. Clients should be informed that these messages should be restricted only to those that are very urgent and cannot await a client's return.

### Radio Contact:

We have a radio base in the office in Puerto Natales. All vehicles used have a radio base and all guides work with a hand-held radio with a super antennae.

*Note: Mountains and weather can affect the the efficiency of the radio contact and so it is not always possible to get immediate contact. In the event of an emergency and we were unable to contact the guide (or a guide could not contact us), someone would ride/drive to the nearest radio point.*

### Remote Travel:

Our trips take us into some pristine wilderness areas. Clients should be aware that the Torres del Paine

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National Park is roughly a 4-6 hour drive from the nearest trauma care facility in Punta Arenas (4 hours if they are situated in the Serrano area of the Park). There is a small hospital in Puerto Natales (3 hours) with a 24-hour medical assistance that can deal with minor injuries and illnesses. In the event of there being an accident or broken bone, clients would have to be taken out of the Park (probably by horse) to the nearest vehicle for the long drive out. There is one helicopter in the park for emergencies but it cannot fly in high winds. All our leaders carry first aid kits for dealing with minor injuries and incidents. Any client with a medical condition or using medication should discuss this with us prior to travel.

*Note: It is a **condition of booking** that clients have a suitable travel insurance policy and that this includes horse riding activities and medical evacuation in the event of an accident or repatriation.*

### Horses:

The horses used locally are Criollo-mix and vary in size with the majority being between 14 - 15 hands. They are strong, fit, willing and sure-footed. We are able to provide good horses to both experienced riders and riders who are a bit more 'rusty'. The pace of the ride will be adjusted by the guide to suit the majority of the riders but as we always travel with more than one staff member i.e guide and horseman, there is some flexibility and riders soon find their own pace during the trip. Riders are not responsible for grooming or tack. Horses are constantly checked for injury and / or lameness and tiredness. At some stages during certain itineraries (and in any case where it becomes necessary for whatever reason) horses will be changed. Here are the standard number of horse changes per trip:

10-DAY ESTANCIA RIDE (5 horse changes)

10-DAY GAUCHOS AND GLACIERS RICE (4 horse changes)

5-DAY ESTANCIA RIDE (2 horse changes)

5-DAY GAUCHOS AND GLACIERS RIDE (2 horse changes)

*Note: When riding horses or when they are in the vicinity of horses clients are under the care of their guide (or his/her assistants/horsemen). Clients must comply with the instructions of that person. It is a condition of booking that they accept that that person is entitled to advise them on matters of safety or refuse to allow a client to continue with the trip if for any reason, including their ability or health, they consider that they may endanger the safety or welfare of themselves, the horse, or any other person involved in the trip. Clients are under no circumstances allowed to ride if they are under the influence of alcohol or drugs. For any of the reasons above, they have no claim against us for compensation.*

### Climate:

Torres del Paine has a milder and dryer microclimate than the surrounding areas of Patagonia because of some unique geological features. The weather however is famously unpredictable and it is possible to experience four seasons in the course of a few hours! Average daily temperatures vary but in summer one can expect 10-20 degrees celsius with the occasional hot day of 25 degrees. Temperatures can drop to zero at night and high winds are common in this area. Although you can never be sure of how Paine will treat its guests, we ask that clients are prepared (both mentally and physically) for the unpredictable and sometimes challenging weather conditions and that they pack accordingly. Good waterproofs (top to toe) are essential. See extra notes under suitability on each itinerary, and the **Kit List PDF** for more information.

### Group Sizes:

We operate our scheduled trips with a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 10 clients. We are able to accept larger groups on custom trips. In respect of custom trips, it is sometimes possible to reduce costs if clients who have organised a private trip (due to date or itinerary preferences) are prepared to have others join them. We are happy to publish the new trip date and circulate this to our agents in an attempt to try and encourage others to join. Please ask for more information on this.

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In the event that the minimum number has not been reached (i.e. 2 on a scheduled trip) we reserve the right to either cancel the departure or offer the one client a different date. More details are available on the **Booking Conditions PDF**.

### Pace of Ride:

The pace is moderate - fast. The pace however is dictated by the terrain and the distance we need to travel on any given day, but where possible there is a lot of trotting and cantering. Distances vary between 20 and 40 kilometres in a day.

### Riding Experience:

Riders on a scheduled trip need to be experienced. As a general rule, they should be able to control a horse on open ground at a canter and be used to riding outside in open spaces.

We can provide willing, forward-going horses to experienced riders who like to go at a faster pace and in addition the horses are extremely kind to riders who prefer to go a bit slower. Most of our scheduled rides are fast-paced rides with long riding days. As stated above, in order to benefit fully from this exciting riding, clients need to be intermediate or above in their riding experience. For those of a lesser standard we can arrange a tailor-made ride which would allow for more flexibility. All riders (but especially those not riding on a regular basis) would benefit from getting 'riding-fit' before coming here.

### Weight Limit:

210 pounds (95 kilos) unless by prior arrangement.

### Age Limit:

12-70 years unless on a custom or private departure. Younger travellers need to be with an experienced / capable adult. They also need to be prepared for a trip of this nature and have the stamina and attitude to travel in remote areas in sometimes challenging weather conditions. We will request clients over 70 to complete a medical / suitability questionnaire before their booking is confirmed.

### Tack:

The tack is Chilean and comprises (usually) of metal or wood-framed saddles onto which layered felt, sheepskin and leather are placed. Rope, rawhide and leather form the bridles, girths, straps etc. The saddles provide adequate comfort for the long days riding and the stirrups consist of a cup through which the foot cannot pass. Most of the horses are ridden in simple snaffles. Halters are worn throughout the ride with rope tied around the horses neck to tie up at lunch stops & rest stops etc.

### Water:

During the trip we use local water supplies from rivers, streams and lakes. Clients should bring a water bottle to fill for their daily drinking supply. Water is always available at camp and there are further rivers and streams to replenish supplies en route. The water is clean and pure and about as close to the source as is possible. There are no communities in the Park to contaminate the water supply and no tropical waterborne diseases such as giardia. However, if any client feels uncomfortable with this arrangement, they should bring iodine drops with them (and the appropriate taste inhibitors sold with them).

### Equipment / Luggage:

A suggested list of what to bring is on the **Kit List PDF**. ***On our camping trips sleeping bags and sleeping pads/mats are provided if the client does not want to bring their own. Sleeping bags are also required in refugios.*** The sleeping bag should be 3 or 4 season and should be carried in an effective stuff sack. We can rent sleeping bags and mats to guests and you should indicate this at the time of booking. For those clients

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renting a sleeping bag, we recommend that they bring a sleeping bag liner (available in silk, cotton or fleece) for their comfort and hygiene.

*Note: For clients who prefer a nice, thick, padded Therm-o-rest mat, we strongly advise them to bring their own as they are hard to get locally and our supplies are limited. The same goes for sleeping bags - we rent good quality 'Sea to Summit' down sleeping bags, but if your client has indicated to you that they tend to feel the cold, they should buy one of their own and bring it down. Ear plugs are also recommended for light sleepers as on windy nights the tents can get very noisy.*

*Note: Please note that whilst we will transport what we consider to be a reasonable amount of luggage, we cannot be responsible for any extra costs due to clients' excessive luggage. The guide will make an assessment of the luggage carried by clients at the beginning of the trip and if he/she feels there is an excessive amount, will advise them as to the alternatives, such as leaving some of it at our office in Puerto Natales. For clients who do not wish to leave some of the luggage behind, we will advise them of any additional costs incurred.*

### Transfer Times:

Travel times are as follows: (times are approximate)

Punta Arenas to Puerto Natales (private transfer or bus)	3 hours
Punta Arenas Airport to Puerto Natales (private transfer or bus)	2 hours 30 minutes
Puerto Natales to Estancia Perales	45 minutes
Laguna Amarga to Laguna Sofía	2 hours
Laguna Sophia to Puerto Natales	30 minutes
Tercera Barranca to Estancia Cerro Guido	20 minutes
Tercera Barranca to Laguna Sofía	1 hour 30 minutes
Cerro Castillo to Laguna Sofía	25 minutes

### Tips / Gratuities:

It is customary for each client to contribute towards a tip for the staff who have travelled with them. It is always best to give the tips directly to the person and we can provide separate envelopes so that guests do not feel awkward in anyway if necessary.

The recommended amount is as follows:

**Horsemen** - The guests will not be with the same horsemen every day, generally they change with the horses. So we recommend guests pay each horseman direct, at the end of his/her section as it is very unlikely they will be seeing them again. Between \$2,000 - \$3,000 (US\$4-6) per horseman, per day, would be appropriate, or more if the guest felt well looked after.

**Guides & Cooks** - At the end of the journey, guests can give tips to the guide and cook. We recommend around \$5,000 (US\$10) per day. If the guests were very happy with the attention they received then they can decide to pay more.

**Driver** - \$2,000 (US\$4) per day, would be sufficient. During the journey guests do not need to tip the driver each day or each time they are in the vehicle. Guests can give the driver a single tip at the end of the trip.

### Further notes on tips while travelling in Chile:

**Taxis** - It is not usual to tip taxi drivers but guests can give them the small change from their fare if they want to.

**Porters** - Small tips are nice gestures for porters but staff in Chile are pretty gracious about tipping and do not stand to attention expecting it! I normally try and have change ready - carrying \$1,000 and \$2,000 pesos

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notes that are very useful for the purpose. (US\$2 and US\$4 respectively).

**Restaurants** - 10% is customary.

### Single Supplements:

For those clients who prefer not to share, we can normally offer single accommodation in tents, hotels and estancias. Please be aware that even on payment of a single supplement we cannot guarantee single accommodation in the refugios although we do our best to secure it. The single supplement is listed on the individual trip itineraries and varies according to the extra cost involved in providing this.

On estancia / hotel trips the extra payment is to secure single accommodation in rooms (where possible) and on camping trips it is to cover the night in hostel and extra camping fees and cargo space.

On our **scheduled trips** we will only request single supplements from those who clearly state they are not willing to share. If by chance, the result is single accommodation due to the final make up of the group, we will not charge the supplement. **However, for all custom groups, single clients will need to pay a single supplement.**

*Note: On Estancia Rides, single accommodation is limited so please check availability with us first.*

### Payment for Trip:

We ask for a deposit of US\$500 from clients, and kindly request that payment is made promptly once we have issued our invoice. We endeavor to get invoices out in advance of **six weeks prior to the departure date of our scheduled trips** with payment expected six weeks prior.

For custom trips, full payment information and confirmation invoices will be sent out on trip confirmation with the payment being due six weeks prior to the start of the trip. Cancellation penalties will be charged in line with European regulations for cancellations. See the **Booking Conditions PDF**.

**Tailor-made itineraries:** We are happy to arrange a tailor-made itinerary for a minimum group of two clients. This could include activities such riding, hiking, fishing, kayaking or a combination of these. Private groups of two will be required to pay an additional 25%.

**Custom Bookings - Itinerary changes:** For custom bookings where the itinerary is agreed upon by the client in advance of travel (and is confirmed on the confirmation invoice), we can only accept or allow itinerary changes by the client during the trip under certain conditions. Acceptable conditions include: changes necessary due to health, fitness or adverse weather conditions making the adherence to the original itinerary impossible. For all other changes to an itinerary (for example hotel changes, route changes, extra services, change of service etc.) due to a change of mind or preference by the client, the guide will require advance payment (where necessary) and a signature from the client or group leader in advance of these changes being put into effect. All guides will carry a form for this purpose. Clients need to be aware that no refund can be issued for services cancelled or not used and that they will need to sign a statement accepting this at the time the change is made. Payment for those clients who are unable to pay in advance should be made in Puerto Natales. The form will give an accurate record of what was discussed and agreed upon at the time.

### Vegetarians:

Please note that Patagonia is a culture largely founded on the farming of sheep and cattle. Meat is a staple for most people in the area. On our camping trips, it is very likely the group will be given a meat asado (BBQ) during their trip. Whilst alternative food is available for non-meat eaters, it might be worth informing vegetarians that they may see meat being prepared and cooked. It can be challenging for vegetarians to travel in what is a very meat-based culture so please make sure clients are aware of this before they travel.

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### Emergency Contacts:

Clients will be asked to provide emergency contact numbers for each client at the time of booking.

### Accommodation - Camping Trips:

We use comfortable tents which are roomy, comfortable and able to withstand the sometimes high winds in the area. Accommodation is based on twin-share. If clients require single accommodation, we will make an extra charge and this is listed on the trip itineraries. However, agents should await final booking numbers as it is possible a single person may have their own tent anyway. If this were the case, we wouldn't charge the single supplement.

Some of the camping will be true 'wilderness' style camping with the only washing facilities being in a river or lake. We request that guests bring camping soap for these instances, which does not contaminate the environment. This is usually available in camping outlets.

Guests usually set up their own tents.

### Accommodation - Estancia / Hotel Trips:

We use both hotels and working and converted estancias. The latter offer a family stay environment with clean and comfortable facilities and cattle and sheep are often farmed there. The hotels we use are all standard twin share accommodations with ensuite facilities and a restaurant on site. They are all beautifully located and offer guests a warm welcome and good service. **Please bear in mind that double beds are hard to secure and advance notice needs to be given to us so we can pre-book these.**

In converted estancias and hosterias the accommodation is comfortable twin share with ensuite facilities. On payment of a single supplement clients may secure single accommodation where this is available.

### Meals - Camping Trips:

Meals are varied and wholesome and include fresh, local fish, pasta, chicken, beef and lamb which will be presented in a typical Chilean meal. Fresh salad is served each night. Wine is Chilean and is served with dinner. All meals are prepared for the guests by a dedicated, professional cook. Packed lunches are prepared by the clients at breakfast and are carried with each guest in their saddle bag. These consist of sandwiches (e.g. regional cheese, ham, salami, peanut butter etc.), fresh fruit, trail bar, chocolate, biscuits and snacks.

Breakfast is normally hot and cold cereals, toast, jams, coffee, tea and juice. At times a cooked breakfast will be served.

Vegetarians can be well catered for and clients should indicate their requirements at the time of booking.

A dining tent is carried for eating meals and cooking although sometimes we choose to eat in a camp 'shelter' or around the campfire (weather obviously permitting).

*Note: Inside dining is usually available at the following camp sites: Rio Serrano, Estancia Laguna Amarga & Estancia Tercera Barranca*

There is vehicle support during the trip which will bring fresh supplies of bread, salad, fruit and vegetables from Puerto Natales.

On arrival at the campsite, wine or beer and picadas (boards of small snacks) are served giving clients ample time to relax while their evening meal is being prepared.

All meals are included. Wine is also included (generous though necessarily limited supplies). Meals in Puerto Natales are generally not included.

We are dedicated to using local and organic produce whenever possible and as much of the meat and vegetables as possible will be produced in Puerto Natales.

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### Meals - Estancia / Hotel Trips:

Meals will be eaten in the restaurants. Food will consist of lamb, beef, chicken or salmon with fresh vegetables or salad accompanied by rice or potatoes. Wine and beer is available at a reasonable cost throughout the trip. Lunches will be prepared by the guide and handed out at the start of each day, and packed into personal saddlebags. They consist of sandwiches (e.g. regional cheese, ham, salami, peanut butter etc.), fresh fruit, trail bar, chocolate, biscuits and snacks. Clients are required to look after their own lunch boxes, which they will hand back to the guide at the end of each day so they can be washed and made ready for the following day.

Breakfast is normally cereals, toast, jams, coffee, tea and juice and possibly eggs.

All meals while in the park, excluding wine and beverages, are normally included in the trip price. In hotels this will be the 'menu' consisting typically of a soup or salad to start, a main course of beef, chicken, or fish and normally a sweet (usually fruit). In home-stay accommodations such as Estancia Tercera Barranca, the meal will be Chilean, home cooked or an outside guacho BBQ (asado). Meals / lunches in Puerto Natales are not included.

Vegetarians can be catered for on all our trips.