



RIDE WORLD WIDE

Chile

Patagonian Frontier and the Puelo Valley 2011-12

Ride Information Sheet

South of Puerto Montt and nestled between the Andean Cordillera and the Pacific Ocean, the Puelo Valley is the Chilean gateway to Patagonia, an area of 1 million square miles straddling the Chilean / Argentine border as it plunges south to Tierra del Fuego. It is the beginning of the fabled land of fjords, snow-capped volcanoes, hanging glaciers, roaring milky-blue rivers, green forested hills and the enchantment of Southern Chile. Much of the landscape is Valdivian forest, one of only a few examples of temperate rainforests in the world. This rainforest is home to a unique collection of animals including the threatened Chilean guemal, the Kodkod, the continent's smallest cat, and the tree-climbing southern Pudu, the world's smallest deer. The forests themselves contain the endemic monkey puzzle tree which has existed since the time of dinosaurs, as well as the second oldest living organism on earth, the Alerce tree.

The neat and energetic Chilean Criollo horse is without doubt the best way to explore this magical landscape. All the rides are run by Argentine-born Cathy Berard who is passionate not only about the startling beautiful area, but also the horses that allow such extensive exploration. Cathy moved to the Puelo Valley in 1997 and with the help of her loyal team of baqueanos, has been organising trips in the area ever since.



Dates Set departure rides between November and late March explore the Cochamó and Puelo valleys, many crossing the border into Argentina. Please see below for departure dates. We can also arrange other departures and itineraries, and tailor-make trips for private groups. Please call us for availability and to check possible options.

Riding Hours in the saddle vary depending on the ride itinerary, and range from 4 to 8 hours riding each day, with breaks to rest and for lunch. You may also be asked to get off to lead up or down any steep hills, so you do need to be comfortable walking on uneven ground and on a gradient - and of course mount your horse unaided. Rides can be arranged for a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 10 guests. Horses are tacked up and prepared for you each morning by the grooms.

The Horses The horses used are locally bred Chilean Criollos, some owned by Cathy Berard (including 2 pure bred Criollo Corralero Chileno mares), others by the baqueanos (local horsemen). The Chilean Corralero is the oldest registered stock horse breed in all the Americas and the third oldest registered breed in the Western Hemisphere. The horses average 14-15hh, are strong, sensible, very sure footed, responsive and forward going, so great fun to ride. They are ridden in the local manner using traditional Chilean tack which has evolved to give the huaso (Chilean cowboy) maximum stability when working with cattle. Feet forward, heels down and pushing into the back of the saddle so the rider's weight is balanced behind and in front of the centre of gravity rather than concentrating the weight in a column over one spot, remarkably comfortable and secure over rough terrain and long distances, particularly in the sheepskin covered saddles. Saddlebags are provided for personal belongings and pack horses transport luggage. The weight limits vary - on most rides the limit is 90kg / 14 stone, on the Andean Crossing the limit is 80kg / 12st 8lbs. Heavier riders can be catered for but there will generally be a charge for an extra horse.



Pace The pace on these trips will vary depending on the going and terrain, generally they will be at a moderate pace overall with some lovely canters along valley floors and along river banks but due to the terrain there are slower sections, with some quite steep mountain tracks, which dictate the pace. The pace can be varied to some extent to suit the abilities of the group.

Riding Experience The rides are aimed at reasonably experienced, confident riders. To join them you must feel relaxed, comfortable and secure in the saddle at a walk, trot and fast canter. You should also be used to riding for reasonably long hours, in an open environment, on sometimes challenging terrain. There are occasional interesting river crossings which require riders to be quiet and confident in the saddle. The horses are sensible, but they have a generally lively temperament and suit confident, relaxed riders.

Fitness As with all our rides, you will enjoy your trip much more if you are fit - both riding fit and with a good level of general fitness. There may be places where you need to dismount to walk over rough ground - both uphill and down. Even if you are in good physical shape, if you do not ride regularly at home then we recommend some concentrated training in the months before you go to get used to the hours you will spend in the saddle.



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Terrain The Puelo Valley is at the southern end on the Andes range. There are still some quite high snow capped peaks in the vicinity of up to 10,000ft, and some valleys are steep sided with granite cliffs but altitude is not really a problem as the highest passes in the area are no more than 7,000ft. High rainfall means that much of the area is forested and there are many rivers, streams and waterfalls. The riding routes are interesting and varied, there are a number of river crossings and some steep climbs but also some more open areas, with flat bottomed river valleys and rolling 'pampa' on the Argentine side.

Safety Rides are accompanied by an English speaking guide as well as local guides and grooms. A medical kit for both horses and riders is carried on each trip. Life jackets are provided on boats for river & lake crossings. VHF radio and communication equipment and mobile 'phones are carried in case of emergencies.



Accommodation There is a range of accommodation on these rides, in the main you stay in small and simple farms as guests of local families. Rooms in these rustic homes are mainly twin or triple and bathrooms are shared and simple (though hot showers are generally available). Meals are eaten with the families. On all rides you also spend a night or two on the little heart-shaped private island of Isla las Bandurrias where you stay in a cosy guest cottage. The cottage has shared rooms for up to 6 people and a couple of bathrooms, a wood burning stove and magnificent views which can be enjoyed from the sun deck. Breakfast is eaten in the cottage and dinner is in the main house on the island where there are an additional two guest bedrooms. On the Puelo Ride you spend 5 nights at small farms and 2 nights on Isla las Bandurrias; on the Andean Crossing Ride there are 3 nights farm accommodation and 2 nights on Isla las Bandurrias and on the Grande Traverse 3 nights are spent camping, 4 nights are in local farmhouses, 1 night at a traditional estancia, 2 nights on Isla las Bandurrias, and 3 nights in hotels/guesthouses. Camping is in simple 2 man 'dome' tents which are set up on arrival, (your help here is welcome but not vital!), mattresses are provided. There are no showers in camps - the clear mountain rivers and lakes are used for washing and loos are open air. Meals when camping are cooked by the baqueanos over an open fire and are usually eaten around the fire.



Meals The food on these rides is a blend of flavours and ingredients consisting of a variety of Andean Creole-Chilean styles. It is generally cooked using a traditional wood burning stove giving a special flavour to the dishes. Depending on the season, you may be served rainbow trout, 'brook trout' (fontinalis), or sea trout. You will also have the opportunity to enjoy the staple of Patagonian cuisine, the traditional barbecue "Asado al palo" or "Asado al Asador" - delicious lamb cooked over glowing embers. As the main local dish, it can be cooked in different ways, usually accompanied with salad, potatoes and, of course, Chilean red wine. Chilean vegetables and fruits are excellent and the variety of the region's berries is impressive. Water from the many springs is crystal clear, safe to drink and tastes delicious. Vegetarians will be catered for as far as possible but please give us prior notice of any special dietary requirements.



Weather With the Andes on one side and the Pacific Ocean on the other, Chile is a land of diverse microclimates often within surprisingly small distances and includes arid desert, high plains, Mediterranean, semi-temperate, cold and temperate rainforests and Patagonian steppes. The established weather patterns are extremely variable and unpredictable. Between October 1st and the 31st of March you can normally expect temperatures within the 15°C and 25°C range during the day, in mid summer it can be a little hotter. In the Chilean spring and autumn the temperatures fluctuate between 8°C and 20°C. The average yearly rainfall in the Puelo Valley is over 2000mm and it can rain at any time of year. As you are in the mountains you need to be prepared for climate changes at any given time of year - it is possible to have a snowstorm one day followed by temperatures edging 32°C the next.

What to bring We will send you a list of things we suggest you bring when you make your booking.

Dates and Rates 2011-2012

Please note that due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, ride rates are now quoted in USD. The sterling price will be the equivalent sterling rate using the USD/sterling exchange rate in force when you book/pay.

NOTE: other dates may be added from time to time - please call us to check

Grand Traverse

17th to 30th November 2011

6th to 19th January 2012

20th December 2011 to 2nd January 2012

12th to 25th February 2012

USD 4470 per person, (7-10 riders) 14 days / 13 nights, average 7-8 hours riding a day

single rooms available in hotels on 3 nights for an additional USD 30 per night

Andean Crossing Ride

15th to 20th November 2011

30th January to 4th February 2012

20th to 25th December 2011

26th to 31st March 2012

USD 2650 per person, (5-8 riders) 6 days / 5 nights, average 5-6 hours riding a day

Puelo Ride

8th to 15th November 2011

2nd to 9th January 2012

3rd to 10th March 2012

28th November to 5th December 2011

21st to 28th January 2012

15th to 22nd March

2nd to 9th December 2011

10th to 17th February 2012

USD 3070 per person, (5-8 riders) 8 days / 7 nights, average 7-8 hours riding a day

Patagonia Frontier Ride

7th to 13th March 2012

USD 2660 per person, (6-8 riders) 7 days / 6 nights, average 5-6 hours riding a day

Rates include all meals (including wine with dinner); shared accommodation; guides, back-up & equipment; horses (riding and pack); set transfers (minibus and boats);

Rate excludes flights to Puerto Montt / Bariloche; personal medical / travel insurance (which you must have); any visa fees; tips; extra nights accommodation (eg in Puerto Montt / Bariloche)

Single Supplement Rates are per person and on a shared basis. Single rooms are not generally an option as most of the houses in which you stay only have rooms which are twin, triple or dormitory style. 3 nights of the Grand Traverse are spent in hotels and it is possible to book a single room for these nights.

Example Itineraries The following are examples of the itineraries planned for the various set date rides - although **please note** that these are only examples of what is planned / available and the day by day arrangements may be varied by your guides at their discretion if the weather or other local conditions require. Please enquire for the Patagonia Frontier Ride itinerary.

Andean Crossing Ride

Own arrangements to arrive Puerto Montt - accommodation can be arranged here, or in nearby Puerto Varas, for those who wish.

Day 1 - You will be met from your hotel by your guide and driven (about 3 hours) through the Valdivian temperate rainforest along the fjords of the Reloncavi estuary carved by glaciers that once flowed from the Patagonian icecap. On arrival on the shores of Lago Tagua-Tagua there will be time for a picnic lunch before taking the ferry across the lake. Then drive on for about an hour to the end of the road where the baqueanos (the local horsemen) will be waiting with horses. Load the pack horses, mount up and ride to the farmhouse of a local family. Accommodation is rustic, charming and simple, mostly in twin, triple or dormitory style rooms with shared bathrooms - and hot showers. Dinner and night at the farmhouse (about 2 ½ hours riding) (L,D)



Day 2 - After breakfast you start with a river crossing, local style as you take a wooden public boat while the horses swim alongside. Tack up and mount up on the other side and continue on into valley through untouched forest with few inhabitants, stopping for a relaxing picnic lunch. In the afternoon there will be another river crossing, this time on your horse. Arrive in time for tea at a remote but self-sufficient homestead which is your base for the next two nights. Time to relax and soak up the peace before dinner and the night. (6-7 hours riding) (B,L,D)

Day 3 - A hearty breakfast before packing your lunch into your saddle bag and heading off on a relaxing ride, crossing the river once more to join the neighbouring valley and approach its hanging glacier. This little valley becomes wild and remote, with incredible flora, devoid of human inhabitants and home to the Alerce, the tallest species of tree in South America and one that can live for over 3000 years (the oldest recorded is over 3600 years old). A leisurely picnic before heading back to the homestead leaving time to explore on foot or relax with a glass of wine before dinner (about 4 hours riding). (B,L,D)

Day 4 - Breakfast and then set off on a full-day ride towards “la pasarela del Rio Puelo”, an important local hanging bridge, crucial for the communication between the local inhabitants and the outside world. This area is particularly spectacular due to its waterfalls and rapids. Stop for a picnic lunch near the bridge and in the afternoon ride on through ancient woodland to reach the shores of Lago Las Rocas. Leave the horses on the mainland and take a 10 minute boat trip to Isla las Bandurrias. Accommodation is in a charming guest house. Dinner and the night on Isla las Bandurrias (6-7 hours riding). (B,L,D)

Day 5 - Breakfast and a short boat ride back to meet the horses on the mainland shore before setting off on a 2 ½ to 3 hour ride to Lago Azul (Blue Lake), known for its crystal clear waters and abundance of fish. Picnic and a siesta on the shores of the lake. After lunch head deep into the Valdivian Forest before arriving back at Lago las Rocas where you are met by the boat for your return to the island. Dinner and the night on Isla las Bandurrias (5-6 hours riding). (B,L,D)

Day 6 - After breakfast, and the boat trip back to the baqueanos and horses, set off on a morning ride to the Mountain Police Station, Retén de Carabineros, to show passports before heading for the border. After clearing Chilena customs and immigration continue on to the shores of Lago Puelo where you say goodbye to your horse and take the ferry across the lake (about ½ hour) to the Argentine border on the far shore. After Argentine border formalities a minibus will be waiting to transfer you to El Bolson for a late lunch at a local restaurant. You have a little time for shopping and to explore before driving to Bariloche airport (about 2 hours), own arrangements for onward travel (about 3 ½ hours riding). (B,L)

Grand Traverse

Day 1 - Own arrangements to arrive Bariloche airport in Argentina. Meet your guide and transfer with the group to a hotel in Bariloche. A full briefing and a traditional 'asadao' (barbecue) dinner at a local restaurant. Night at the hotel. (D)

Day 2 - An early breakfast before driving about 30 kms to the starting point of the ride at Estancia Ñirihuau. After familiarising yourself with the horses, tack and local style of riding, you set off, passing the Cerro las Buitreras and Arroyo la Mina. From here there are terrific panoramic views over the Alto Chubut river valley. A picnic lunch before continuing on to Rio Pichileufu and your riverside camp. Dinner and night in camp (about 5 hours riding). (B,L,D)

Day 3 - Breakfast in camp then load up the pack horses and head from the Pichileufú Valley to the Carreras mountain pass (6,000ft), a good spot for watching condors. You then start your descent to the source of the Rio Alto Chubut, through the drier Andean steppe with sparse vegetation, used as summer grazing by semi-nomadic shepherds. Push on to the spot where you will set up camp for the night, at an altitude of about 5,000ft, on the banks of the stream that becomes the Alto Chubut River. Dinner around the camp fire and night in camp (about 5 hours riding). (B,L,D)

Day 4 - Today start riding down through the Chubut Valley where signs still remain of the gold panning of years gone by. Pass an abandoned lead mine - there may be an opportunity to visit the family that lives nearby for an inside view of life in this part of Patagonia. In the afternoon an interesting ride over some tricky terrain up to la Serrucha pass with stunning views of the Tronador Mountain and its glaciers, and the seemingly endless steppe. Dinner and night in camp (about 6 hours riding). (B,L,D)

Day 5 - After breakfast and striking camp, ride down onto the Patagonian steppe where the vegetation changes and boxed-leafed barberry, fire bushes and fire tongue proliferate. Today's route takes you to an old and traditional working estancia. This 19th century estancia has been sympathetically refurbished and has lost none of its original charm. Before dinner there may be time to visit the shearing shed and the working depots. Dinner is a delicious asado with local vegetables and Argentine wine. Night at estancia. (about 6 hours riding). (B,L,D)



Day 6 - The last day's riding on the Argentine Criollos takes you to the abandoned steam train station in Filancao, once the primary means of communication between the isolated villages. The route continues to the small village of Norquinco populated mainly by descendents of the indigenous Mapuche people and on to the road where, after a morning's ride, you bid the horses and the baqueanos farewell. Transfer to the village of El Maitén for lunch and onward to El Bolsón. Dinner in the town and the night at a guesthouse at El Bolsón (4-5 hours riding). (B,L,D)



Day 7 - A day free from riding but some important miles to cover nevertheless. After a relaxed breakfast you transfer to Lago Puelo quay, and board the boat which is waiting to take you across to Chile (about 2 ½ hours). After clearing Argentine customs you cross the rapids that divide Argentina and Chile. Stop here for a picnic lunch and then, after passing through the Chilean customs control, there will be a 10 minute walk to Lago Las Rocas. Here you meet the motorboat will take you to Isla las Bandurrias where accommodation is in a charming guest house. Dinner and the night on Isla las Bandurrias. (B,L,D)

Day 8 - Breakfast and a short boat ride to meet the horses on the mainland shore before setting off on a 2½ to 3 hour ride to Lago Azul. Picnic and a siesta on the shore of the lake, and then head deep into the Valdivian Forest - a temperate rain forest with ancient Alerce trees (Fitzroya Cupresoides) as well as other local 'giants' such as the Coihue and Arrayanes. Wend you way back to the shores of Lago las Rocas where you are met by the boat for your return to the island for dinner and the night (5-6 hours riding). (B,L,D)

Day 9 - After breakfast, a short boat trip back to the horses and then set off riding to the source of the River Puelo. You take a traditional raft across the river and then continue down the valley to a dramatic hanging bridge which you cross, one horse at a time. Ride on to a cosy house on the banks of the Rio Puelo arriving in time for dinner and the night (4-5 hours riding). (B, L, D)

Day 10 - After a typically hearty Chilean breakfast, saddle up and ride back across the hanging bridge, then follow the west side of the valley, with plenty of interesting river crossings en route. Lunch is a picnic on the riverbank and perhaps time for a siesta. In the afternoon, ride on, almost to the end of the valley, to a small house which is your home for the next two nights (about 6 hours riding). (B,L,D)

Day 11 - Breakfast, pack your lunch into your saddle bag, and head off on a relaxing ride crossing the river once more to join the neighbouring valley and approach its hanging glacier. This little valley becomes wild and remote, with fascinating flora, and remains untarnished by human inhabitants. A leisurely picnic before heading back to the homestead leaving time to explore on foot or relax with a glass of wine before dinner (about 4 hours riding). (B,L,D)

Day 12 - A farmhouse breakfast and back into the saddle! This morning's route takes you through beautiful ancient forest, across pampas and a number of rivers before stopping for a picnic lunch. Continue on through an amazingly fertile valley before boarding the ferry across the river, with the horses swimming alongside. Dinner and the night in a cosy farm cottage (about 6-7 hours riding). (B,L,D)

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Day 13 - A good breakfast before the final stretch through the forest and along the banks of the Rio Puelo to the hamlet of Llanada Grande where your onward transport awaits. An hours drive takes you to the ferry that crosses the Lago Tagua-Tagua. A picnic lunch and continue on to Puerto Varas taking the scenic route along the Reloncaví Estuary, through the Vicente Perez Rosales national park, and along the shores Lake Llanquihue with dramatic views of the volcanoes Osorno and Calbuco. Farewell dinner and the night in Puerto Varas (about 3 hours riding and 4 hours road transfer). (B,L,D)

Day 14 - Breakfast and transfer to the airport in Puerto Montt. (B)



Puelo Ride

Your own arrangements to arrive in Puerto Montt - accommodation can be arranged here, or in nearby Puerto Varas, for those who wish.

Day 1 - You will be met from your hotel by your guide and transferred by minibus through the Valdivian forest along the Reloncavi estuary to Lake Tagua-Tagua (about 3 hours). Time for a picnic lunch before crossing the lake by ferry and driving a further ½ hour to meet the baqueanos and horses. Load up the horses and ride to the river which you cross by boat, the horses swimming alongside. Continue on by horse to a cosy cottage where you can leave your bags and head off for a ride before dinner. Night at the cottage (about 2 hours riding). (L,D)

Day 2 - After a good breakfast, load the packhorses and head off through virgin forest along narrow tracks untouched by modern living. A picnic lunch and a siesta before riding on to a house at the foot of a hill where you will have dinner and spend the night (about 5 hours riding). (B, L, D)

Day 3 - Today will be a long day riding. As you negotiate this sometimes tricky terrain it becomes evident why the horse is the best means of travel in this part of Patagonia. A picnic lunch and continue on to Puerto Urrutia where you say good bye to the baqueanos and horses who have been your travel companions thus far. Transfer by motor boat up the river to a cosy cottage with wonderful views where you will have dinner and spend the night (about 7 hours riding). (B,L,D)



Day 4 - After breakfast a brief boat ride before meeting the new horses. Time to enjoy this beautiful landscape and cross the river just as the locals do, on a wooden ferry while the horses swim alongside. Ride into the Ventisqueros valley where you will stop for a relaxing picnic lunch on the sandy shores of the river before riding on to the farmhouse where you will be spending the next two nights. (6-7 hours riding) (B,L,D)

Day 5 - Breakfast, pack your lunch into your saddle bag and head off on a relaxing ride crossing the river once more to join the neighbouring valley and approach its hanging glacier. A leisurely picnic before heading back to the homestead, leaving time to explore on foot or relax with a glass of wine before dinner (about 4 hours riding). (B,L,D)

Day 6 - Breakfast and then set off on a full-day ride towards 'la pasarela del Rio Puelo', an important local hanging bridge crucial for the communication between the local inhabitants and the outside world. Stop for a picnic lunch near the bridge. The afternoon ride is through ancient woodland before reaching the shores of Lago Las Rocas. Leaving the horses for the night, take a 10 minute boat trip to private island, las Bandurrias, where accommodation is in a charming guest house. Dinner and the night on Isla las Bandurrias (6-7 hours riding). (B, L, D)

Day 7 - Breakfast and a short boat ride to meet the horses on the shore before setting off on a 2½ to 3 hour ride to Lago Azul. Picnic and a siesta on the shore of the lake. After lunch head deep into the Valdivian Forest before arriving back on the shores of Lago Las Rocas and are met by the boat for your return to the island for dinner and the night. (5-6 hours riding) (B,L,D)



Day 8 - After breakfast, and farewell to the island, a short trip back to meet the huasos and horses before a morning ride to the Mountain Police Station, Retén de Carabineros, to show passports before heading for the border. After clearing Chilena customs and immigration continue on to the shores of Lago Puelo. Here you say goodbye to your Chilean horse and embark on a boat trip across the lake (about ½ hour) to the Argentine border on the far shore. After Argentine border formalities you board the minibús that will be waiting to transfer you to El Bolson for a late lunch at a great local restaurant. You have a little time for shopping and to explore before continuing on to Bariloche by minibús (about a 2 hour drive). Own arrangements for onward travel (about 3 ½ hours riding). (B,L)

Flights and travel information The meeting point for the Andean Crossing and Puelo Rides is Puerto Montt in Chile. There are regular daily flights from Santiago, Chile's capital, to Puerto Montt, with LAN Chile and also Sky Airlines. There is also an extensive network of buses (for example TurBus and Pulman) which are comfortable (flat bed seats), convenient and safe - the journey by bus from Santiago to Puerto Montt takes about 14 hours. At present there are no direct flights between London and Santiago but Iberia, LAN Chile and Aerolineas Argentinas, all fly to Santiago via Madrid. You can also fly with a combination of British Airways and LAN Chile to Santiago, via Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo or Miami. American Airlines also have flights via New York and Air France via Paris. Flights will cost from about £850 economy return, depending on the airline and season.

The start point for the Grand Traverse is Bariloche in Argentina and there are regular daily flights from Buenos Aires Jorge Newbery (Aeroparque) domestic airport into San Carlos de Bariloche. You can also fly to Puerto Montt via Santiago and take scenic bus/boat route across to Bariloche. Again there are also luxury overnight buses (comfortable flat bed seats and good value) from Buenos Aires to Bariloche, the bus journey takes about 18 hours. British Airways currently have daily flight departures to Buenos Aires, usually leaving London Heathrow at about 21.00 arriving Buenos Aires at about 10.30 the next day. Iberia and Aerolineas Argentinas also have daily flights from London via Madrid to Buenos Aires. Other options are via the continent (eg Air France or Lufthansa) or via the USA. Fares to Buenos Aires start at about £850 per person economy return although this will vary depending on availability and how far in advance you book.

Please call us for more flight information or if you would like a fare quote. Our ATOL number for flight bookings is 6213.

General visa and health information (NB this is a brief outline - further information will be sent to you if you make a confirmed booking)

Visas If you hold a full British Passport and are visiting Argentina or Chile for less than 3 months, you do not need to arrange a visa in advance although visa requirements are always subject to change and you should always check up to date requirements before you travel.

Health No jabs are required as a condition of entry to Argentina or Chile from the UK and Europe. The Hospital for Tropical Diseases in London recommends that you ensure you are up to date Tetanus and Hepatitis A. Hepatitis B, Rabies and Typhoid may also be recommended in some circumstances. If you are not up to date with these you should visit your GP or a travel clinic about 4 weeks before departure.

(Updated 16/11/11)

