



RIDE WORLD WIDE

Southern Chile, Patagonia 2012

Riding Trip Information Sheet

These trips explore the spectacular terrain of Torres del Paine National Park in southern Patagonia. The scenery in this area is undoubtedly some of the wildest and most breathtaking in the world, with huge granite spires, blue glaciers flowing down from the Southern Patagonian Ice Cap, turquoise lakes and forests of southern beech trees. Due to its remoteness, accommodation in the area is limited and access necessitates long hours in a vehicle on bumpy and often dusty roads. Those participating in the rides need to be prepared for this and for the rigours of camping, or staying in simple estancias / hosterias, in a region where the weather is unstable and can change quickly! However, the journey and the vagaries of the weather are more than compensated for by the wonderful riding country. The trips are accompanied by experienced guides, either Chilean, English or American who know the area well. All speak fluent English and Spanish, are knowledgeable, safety conscious and proud to share this wonderful country with fellow riders.

Dates Trips are generally for 11 days (Punta Arenas to Punta Arenas) and most include a minimum of 7 full days riding. They are run from fixed dates between November and March each year, with itineraries that include different accommodation options available. Please see the departure dates below and contact Ride World Wide to discuss your plans and availability. As well as pure riding itineraries, an 11 day itinerary including riding, walking and sea kayaking can also be arranged (the 'Patagonian Blue Ice Trail') and walking, kayaking and whale watching extensions can also be arranged after any ride dates. There is also a special 10 day estancia-based itinerary at the end of March / early April when horses are ridden out of the National Park to winter grazing. See dates overleaf and please call us for detailed itineraries.



The Horses The horses used for the rides are bred locally on the surrounding estancias for working with cattle and sheep. They are cross breeds, generally crosses of Chilean horse or Criollo mix and are of a medium build. With some Percheron blood, they are a little taller than the local horses of northern Chile, though most range from about 14.2hh to 15.2hh. They are good-natured and are a safe, forward going, responsive and enjoyable ride. All the horses are used to neck reining and are ridden in Chilean style tack with large comfortable sheepskins on the saddle.

Riding There is generally 4 to 7 hours riding on each riding day on these trips, covering 20 to 40 kms. This is broken up with rest stops and a long break for lunch and a siesta. There is also usually plenty of time for walks, photography or to simply relax with a book and admire the spectacular views. The itineraries planned often include a change of horses part way through and on the Estancia Rides horses are changed three times so horses are fresh and riders have the opportunity of trying different mounts. Trips are usually run for a minimum of 4 riders although they may be run for just 2 in some circumstances (see notes overleaf). Groups are limited to a maximum of 12 riders. There is a weight limit of 15 stone / 95 kgs on the rides and usually an age limit of over 12 and under 70 - though riders outside this limit can be accepted by prior arrangement as long as riding ability and fitness allow. For older riders a medical certificate will be required.

Pace The pace on the rides varies with the terrain but overall it is moderate and well balanced. The going in much of the National Park is quite grassy and soft and Patagonia's tremendous open spaces allow plenty of opportunities for fast riding with long exhilarating canters on the open plains and along the flat bottomed valleys that run amongst the Paine Massif. At other times, the pace is slower as you weave your way through forests of southern beech, wade across glacial rivers, climb mountain passes to admire views over vast expanses of blue and white ice below and ride along the lake shores.

Riding Experience The rides are best suited to reasonably competent riders who are secure in the saddle and comfortable on a horse in open country at all paces. They are aimed at those with a reasonable amount of riding experience, however there is a good selection of well mannered, steady but forward going horses to suit riders of different abilities and, as well as enjoyable, responsive horses for the experienced rider, steady, reliable horses are available for those who are rusty or have limited experience, but who are confident and fit. Every participant (particularly those with limited riding experience) will enjoy the trip much more if they are riding fit as the hours are quite long and if you do not ride regularly at home, we recommend you accustom yourself to the time spent in the saddle with regular training before you go.



Terrain The terrain in the area changes during the ride and varies from vast rolling grassy plains, to steep wooded valleys. High snow clad mountains and huge glaciers sweep down through the beech forest and spill out into numerous blue-grey lakes and always, as a dramatic back drop, is the great Paine Massif which you will see from many different angles.

Wildlife There are over one hundred species of birds in the Paine area including the giant condor, flamingos, ibis, black necked swans, rheas and austral parrots. Guanaco and fox number among the twenty five species of mammal and, with the Paine reserve about the most likely place in South America to catch a glimpse of puma, there is plenty in the area for the wildlife enthusiast.

Accommodation Accommodation on the rides varies with the itinerary. On all itineraries the first and last nights are spent at the 4* Hotel Rey Don Felipe in Punta Arenas. On Camping Rides following nights are spent mainly under canvas, using tough, wind / weather proof three man dome tents for two people (single tents can be arranged at a supplement), with sleeping bags (which you need to take yourself) with two nights in bunkhouse accommodation at a refugio. For 3 days on the camping ride pack horses will accompany you and carry luggage, tents, sleeping bags, sleeping mats and other equipment, on other days equipment is moved by vehicle. On most trips riders tend to set up their own tents, although the guide and helpers are available to help if required. Sometimes camps are true 'wilderness' camps with no washing facilities laid on and on other days they are set up in, or near, one of the National Park's appointed camping areas where there may be showers (showers are available on 5 of the 8 nights on the standard camping itinerary) - usually with hot water, although this can never be guaranteed! There may also be a simple refugio (a basic hut) available for shelter if the wind is very strong. The camp sites are all beautifully situated and are carefully chosen for their setting and solitude. When private camps are set up away from the nominated areas, they will be by a lake or stream and on these nights, rivers and lakes are used for washing - and there may also be a chance to swim for the brave! On the Estancia Rides other nights are spent mainly on comfortable family run estancias (farms), either working estancias that offer comfortable family style guest rooms / a small hotel, or estancias that have been fully converted for guests. All are beautifully located and most have marvellous views. Rooms are generally twin bedded with private bathroom, although sometimes bathrooms may be shared.



Meals Meals are wholesome, generous, and surprisingly varied bearing in mind the remoteness of the area and that all supplies have to be transported into the Park especially. Both Camping and Estancia Rides include breakfast, lunch and dinner each day when on the ride. Lunches in Puerto Natales are not included, nor dinner in Punta Arenas on the first night. Days usually start with an ample breakfast with a choice of cereal, toast or bread, perhaps ham and / or cheese, with fruit juice and coffee and / or tea. Sometimes a cooked breakfast might be offered. A packed saddle bag lunch of sandwiches (which you make up yourself in the morning from a variety of fillings - tuna, cheese, salami, ham etc.), biscuits, fruit is carried with you to eat en-route, picnic style, when out riding. Dinner when camping is usually two or three courses prepared for you and either eaten around the camp fire, in the dining tent or 'quincho' with a roaring fire. It might be a dish of fresh local salmon or other fish, pasta or a Chilean steak cooked over the fire and washed down with local wine. Salad is usually served with dinner, and wine (in generous, though not necessarily unlimited, quantities!) is included on Camping Rides. On Estancia Rides arrangements for dinner vary with the accommodation. When staying at a private estancia, you will generally eat with the family who own the property and your main dish might be chicken, lamb or fresh fish with a vegetarian option available. On other nights you will eat at your hosteria or refugio restaurant where there is usually a reasonable 'menu', typically a choice of a soup or salad starter, a main course of fish, beef or chicken with a variety of salads and vegetables and a pudding (usually fruit). Drinks / wine are not included but you can buy wine, beer and other drinks at the estancias / hosterias and prices are reasonable. The food overall is pretty good and varied and your guides will do their best to cater for any particular dietary requests as long as prior notice is given. You should be aware however, that because of the remoteness of the area, much depends on availability of supplies, which have to be brought in from the nearest town. Menus may vary depending on what is on offer there at the time and fresh fruit and vegetables can be hard to get or supplies limited.



Weather The weather in Patagonia is notoriously variable and although it is often milder in the Park than in the surrounding regions, you need to be prepared for weather and temperatures which can change rapidly, sometimes freezing at night, rising to about 20-25°C on a still, cloudless day, then dropping suddenly again. The wind can often be extremely strong, it is possible to experience all four seasons in a day and rain is quite possible at any time, generally in blustery showers, so come prepared!

What to bring We will send you a clothing list with suggestions of what to bring when you book.



DATES AND PRICES

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

Camping Rides

16th to 26th January 2012

9th to 19th February 2012

14th to 24th March 2012

Rates 2012

4 or more riders **US\$3185** per person

*Small group supplement for 3 riders US\$250 per person

*Small group supplement for 2 riders US\$690 per person

*Single supplement US\$300

These rates INCLUDE - All riding, guiding and equipment, 6 nights twin camping accommodation, camping equipment (other than sleeping bags and sleeping mats), 2 nights in a remote bothy (bunk beds) and 2 nights hotel accommodation in Punta Arenas, meals (except lunch in Puerto Natales / dinner in Punta Arenas on the first and last nights), wine with dinner, Park and camp fees, entrance fees to the Penguin colony, the services of an English speaking guide, baqueanos who care for the horses, waterproof stuff sacks for packing luggage throughout the trip and use of saddle bags, vehicle transfers with the group at set times from Punta Arenas to the start of the ride and back.

These rates EXCLUDE - Flights to Chile / Punta Arenas, airport taxes, airport transfers, meals in Punta Arenas (except breakfast) or Puerto Natales, any extra drinks en route, personal insurance (which you must have), any visa fees, hire of sleeping bags or mats if required, local gratuities (see note on tipping below).

Estancia Rides

29th January to 8th February 2012

24th February to 5th March 2012

29th March to 7th April 2012*

***Special itinerary** - moving horses to winter grazing, please enquire for itinerary and price

Rates 2012

4 or more riders **US\$3950** per person

Small group supplement for 2-3 riders US\$550 per person

Single supplement US\$800

These Rates INCLUDE - All riding, guiding and equipment, 10 nights twin accommodation, all meals (excluding wine/drinks) on the ride (except lunch in Puerto Natales on day 2 and day 10 and dinner in Punta Arenas on day 1), Park fees, entrance fees to the penguin colony, the services of an English speaking guide and baqueanos who care for the horses, use of saddle bags, transfers by vehicle with the group at set times from Punta Arenas to the start of the ride and back.

These rates EXCLUDE - Flights to Chile / Punta Arenas, airport taxes, airport transfers, lunch on transfer days in Puerto Natales, dinner in Punta Arenas on the first night, wine and other drinks, personal insurance (which you must have), any visa fees and local gratuities (see note on tipping below).

Notes: Rates assume twin accommodation. For a single tent on the camping rides the supplement is US\$300 per person. A single room on the Estancia Ride is US\$800. Please note - there are only limited rooms available. Please enquire when you book if you would like a single room and we can check if this is available. The single supplement on Camping Rides covers hotel nights in Punta Arenas as well as extra camping fees payable to the Park authorities and the cost of extra pack-horses etc to carry additional tents and equipment. It does not include the 2 nights in the bothy (pueblo Tercera) where accommodation is in bunk beds.





Patagonian Blue Ice Trail - please enquire for itinerary

6th to 16th February 2012

9th to 19th March 2012

Rates 2012:

4 or more riders **US\$3865** per person

Small group supplement for 2 riders US\$760 per person

Small group supplement for 3 riders US\$260 per person

Single supplement US\$350

Rates INCLUDE - 3 days riding, 4 days hiking, 1 day kayaking and 1 day in zodiacs, all guiding and equipment (except sleeping bags/mats), 10 nights twin accommodation (6 camping, 1 in a refugio, 3 in hotels / estancias), all meals (except dinner on day 1, and 10 and lunch on day 1 and day 11), Park fees, river fees, camp fees, entrance fees to the penguin colony, the services of an English speaking guide and baqueanos who care for the horses, waterproof stuff sacks for packing luggage throughout the trip and use of saddle bags, transfers by vehicle with the group at set times from Punta Arenas to the start of the ride and back.

Rates EXCLUDE - Flights to Chile / Punta Arenas, airport taxes, airport transfers, lunch on transfer days in Puerto Natales, meals (other than breakfast) in Punta Arenas, wine and other drinks at hotels, personal insurance (which you must have), any visa fees and local gratuities.



TIPPING - A tip for the Chilean staff on your riding trip will be appreciated and to avoid uncertainty, an amount of about US\$60 per person to be divided amongst all the staff, is generally suggested. It is also suggested that you give the total sum to your guide at the end of the trip for him / her to distribute.

Flights and travel information for all rides

You will need to fly to Santiago, the capital of Chile, and then take an internal flight to Punta Arenas at the southern tip of Chilean Patagonia, the meeting point for the rides. 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 Sao Paulo or Miami. There are 3 or 4 internal flights a day between Santiago and Punta Arenas. Flights will cost from about £800 economy return, depending on the airline and season. Please call us for more flight information or if you would like a fare quote. Our ATOL number for flight bookings is 6213. Airport transfers on arrival in Punta Arenas are not included, these can be arranged (US\$40 per person each way) alternatively there are taxis readily available.

Itineraries The following are example itineraries for the Camping and Estancia rides planned. Please call if you would like a copy of the Patagonian Blue Ice Trail itinerary. Please note that they are only examples and the route and daily itinerary may be varied by your guides if weather conditions or participants' riding experience requires. Please also note that the itineraries planned assume a minimum of 4 participants. If there are less than this, the rides can still be run (for a minimum of 2) but the small group supplement is payable.

Example Itinerary - Camping Rides

Day 1 You will need to make your own way from Punta Arenas airport to the Hotel Rey Don Felipe on the first night. This is very easy either by taxi or public bus with private transfer possible on request (extra charge). A room will be booked in your name. Your guide will meet you at about 7.30pm to escort the group for dinner and chat about the ride itinerary and to answer any last minute questions about the trip, what to take and so on. Overnight Hotel Rey Don Felipe or similar.



Day 2 You will be collected from the Hotel Rey Don Felipe (usually at about 08.00) then set off by vehicle, stopping after about an hour to see the Magellanic Penguins at the nearby penguin colony, before driving onto Puerto Natales, where you will stop for lunch. After Puerto Natales, continue on to Estancia 3R, a private working estancia located north east of Torres del Paine National Park (about 6 ½ hours driving altogether). This is a mystical and unexplored place where you can literally feel the energy of the ancestors who once inhabited this land. The estancia is very close to the border with Argentina and is surrounded by jagged, wild peaks better known as the Sierra Baguales. Here you may see wild Baguales horses and witness a 'Doma India', a form of 'horse whispering' where horses are broken in by a slow building of trust and gentle persuasion. The night is spent camping (with showers) in this beautiful valley also considered a significant archaeological site where it is possible to hunt for fossils under the huge Patagonian skies. (B,D)

Day 3 After a good breakfast, the gauchos (or 'baqueanos' as they are called in this part of Chile) will introduce you to the horses and, after a short familiarisation with them and the riding style, you set off riding towards the 'Teta las Chinas' into backcountry, where you may spot the wild Bagual horses in their natural environment. The first part of the ride is at a very relaxed pace to give you time to get used to your horse and the South American tack. The immensity of the landscape here is striking. You will ride through a myriad of valleys and as you climb higher, enjoy the **cont. over**

Day 3 cont incredible panoramic views in every direction, where you may see the Andean condor with its mighty wing span as it soars on the warm air thermals above. After about 5 to 6 hours riding with plenty of time to take photos, and a stop for a picnic, you return to the campsite at Estancia 3R. A second night camping under these huge, star filled skies. (B,L,D)

Day 4 Today you saddle up for a ride south towards Estancia Tercera. The La Cumbre and Baguales mountain ranges will dominate the scenery to your left as you head through the valleys. The scenery gradually changes from the arid landscapes of the borderlands to the greener and more colourful pampas with dramatic views of azure lakes and the granite peaks of the "Torres" or towers of Paine, after which the park is named, in the distance. Today is a fairly long day, about 7 hours riding, before you arrive at the campsite which is on private land belonging to Estancia Tercera. Time to relax and enjoy the tranquility whilst dinner is prepared. The night is spent at a beautiful campsite in a hidden, protected valley with fantastic views of the granite towers (showers available). (B,L,D)

Day 5 After packing up camp and loading up the pack horses, set off riding towards the magnificent "torres" and the startling blue waters of Laguna Azul to the north east of Torres del Paine. Ride along the shores of the lake, then head north towards Laguna Stokes where a large natural meadow ('vega') often attracts the wild criollo horses to graze. There will be many excellent photo opportunities on this route as you pass through forests, pastures and the lake where Lady Florence Dixie first camped having sighted the towers. Eventually you arrive at a remote campsite beside the river at Lago Paine. (4 ½-5 hours riding). (B,L,D)



Day 6 After breakfast, set off riding to Lake and Glacier Dickson. Dickson is one of the more remote and rarely visited glaciers in the park due to its inaccessibility. The ride takes you past the northerly peaks of the Paine chain where one of the peaks is topped by a black, craggy rock in the shape of a Tehuelche Indian Face where the 'headband' is decorated with snowdrifts even in summer. The trail then heads north, passing ancient southern beech forests and scattered lakes before reaching the viewpoint above this beautiful lake and glacier, a magical picnic spot. In the afternoon ride back to the campsite at Lago Paine for dinner and the night (no showers). 6-7 hours riding. (B,L,D)

Day 7 Today the ride heads back through a beautiful valley, an area usually home to large breeding groups of guanaco and the ostrich like nandu (southern rhea). You will be following the contour lines as you ride south close to the Paine River. Stop to see the lovely Salto Paine (waterfall) with its rushing waters crashing over the rocks and sweeping down-river. Continue riding to the Laguna Amarga area of the park where you leave the horses. Transfer by vehicle across the park (1 to 2 hours) with plenty of opportunities to stop and take photos before arriving at camp set up beside the salmon stocked waters of the Serrano River. The campsite offers spectacular views of the Paine Massif and for early risers, some of the best sunrises in Patagonia (approx 3-4 hours riding). (B,L,D)

Day 8 An early start today for the beautiful ride out of Torres del Paine and into the remote and pristine Bernardo O'Higgins National Park. This is a new ride in a virgin area and one where you will see few, if any, people. The route takes you due south through acres of native forest passing scattered lakes and streams as you head towards Lago Brush. In these pristine surroundings is a small lakeside shepherds hut ('puesto') and camp is set up in the meadows where the horses can graze nearby. The lake offers exceptional fishing, local style, or you can relax with a good book while dinner is prepared. Night in camp. (5-6 hours riding). (B,L,D)

Day 9 After breakfast in camp, today is a longer ride as you head off through ancient southern beech forests crossing grassy meadows. Ride close to the Serrano River with the dramatic mountains of the Chacabuco range looming to your left and continue on to the beautiful hanging Balmaceda Glacier which clings onto the granite walls as it tumbles down the mountainside and into the waters of Last Hope Sound. Stop near the glacier to take photos, walk, relax and have lunch before riding back to the campsite at Lago Brush. A second night wild camping beside the lake. (6-7 hours riding) (B,L,D).

*Note - a 'zodiac' boat can be arranged to take you close to the glacier wall. There is an extra cost and to be able to do this the group would need to be at the glacier by midday. Prices on request.

Day 10 A final breakfast in this beautiful setting, then pack up camp, load the pack horses and ride back to the Serrano River where you say farewell to the horses and baqueanos (4 hours riding). Transfer by vehicle back to Puerto Natales for a quick lunch and last minute shopping for souvenirs before the return transfer to Punta Arenas. On arrival in Punta Arenas you will be driven to the Hotel Rey Don Felipe for the night. Own arrangements for dinner (B)

Day 11 Breakfast and depart. (B)



Example Itinerary - Estancia Ride

Day 1 - On arrival at the airport in Punta Arenas you will need to make your own way to the Hotel Rey Don Felipe. This is very easy either by taxi or public bus (a private transfer is possible on request at an extra charge). Your guide will meet you at about 7.30pm to escort the group for dinner and chat about the ride itinerary and to answer any last minute questions about the trip, what to take and so on. Overnight Hotel Rey Don Felipe or similar.

Day 2 - Breakfast and set off driving to Puerto Natales where there is a short stop for lunch. Continue driving after lunch, firstly along the shores of Last Hope Sound where you may see black necked swans against the impressive backdrop of Mt Balmaceda, towards Torres del Paine National Park. Your destination is the estancia and hosteria Tres Pasos, still a working estancia, with traditional buildings, pretty gardens and lovely views. There will be a chance to unpack and relax a little before an introductory ride to get used to the horses, tack and riding style. Return to Estancia Tres Pasos for drinks, dinner and the night. 3-4 hours riding (B,D)

Day 3 - Breakfast and saddle up for a full day's ride. Today you head north west to the outpost town of Cerro Castillo. This is a beautiful ride across grassy meadows and welcoming pampas with opportunities for some long canters on the responsive and comfortable horses. After a leisurely picnic and an afternoon's riding, arrive at the Hosteria el Pionero. Surrounded by the customary belt of trees, the main house has the feel of an English country house and was built by European settlers at the beginning of the 20th century. Once home to one of the most important and influential estancieros in the region, it is very comfortable with a fine restaurant offering a variety of typical local foods as well as international cuisine. The fireside bar is an excellent place to enjoy a pisco sour. Comfortable en suite accommodation (some rooms with fireplaces). 6-7 hours riding. (B,L,D)

Day 4 - After a typical Chilean breakfast of home baked bread and cakes set off on fresh horses north east across classic Patagonian landscape with the soft, inviting pampa stretched out before you towards the La Cumbre and Baguales mountain ranges, a dramatic natural border between Chile and Argentina, with the mountains of the Paine Massif to the east. The route takes you across land belonging to various local farmers and with luck there may be an invitation to join a local for tea or maté. A picnic lunch on the way to your destination, Estancia Cerro Guido which lies north east of Torres del Paine, has wonderful views of the Towers themselves and a number of historic buildings to explore. Founded in the late 19th century, Guido is one of the area's largest estancias which the owners have sensitively refurbished preserving the heritage of the original estancia. Dinner in the restaurant and overnight at the estancia (en suite rooms) 7-8 hours riding. (B,L,D)



Day 5 - Today is a shorter but exciting ride across wide open pampas and grassy valleys towards the huge granite peaks of the Paine mountain range as you head south west to the land belonging to Estancia Tercera. The terrain is perfect for long canters when you can relax and enjoy the spectacular views before arriving at the comfortable ranch house on this working estancia. Estancia Tercera is an authentic country house with comfortable en suite rooms and with fabulous views of the Towers from its large west facing windows. Evening drinks in front of the fire and dinner in the traditional quincho (wooden dining room with outside BBQ area). 5-6 hours riding. (B,L,D)

Day 6 - Breakfast and set off riding west through forests and flower-filled meadows towards the peaks of Torres del Paine and the stunning deep blue waters of Laguna Azul framed by the Towers themselves. Then head south before crossing the area known as Canadon Macho with its Vega Nandu, an area the is perfect for spotting wildlife and for photography, and normally inhabited by large groups of both guanaco and rhea. Continue on before dismounting to walk to the beautiful Salto Paine, a pretty waterfall where glacial waters thunder over the rocks. Mount up again and ride past Estancia Laguna Amarga (bitter lake) and around the salt encrusted shores where the surrounding mountains are reflected in the emerald green waters. Continue east back to Estancia Tercera where a second night is spent. 6-7 hours riding. (B,L,D)



Day 7 - Today set off across the wide open pampas towards the heart of the Park with the Towers of Paine and mountains of the Paine Massif dominating the horizon. Ride across rivers and past many lakes, all a different shade of blue, as you cross the summer grazing grounds of large groups of guanaco. You will have plenty of time to take photos and watch these fascinating and agile animals, and perhaps stop to pick some ripe calafate berries from one of the many bushes growing in the area. The ride then heads south of the Paine mountains towards Lake Nordenskjold following the route taken by the Paine River. You will have spectacular views of the famous Horns (Cuernos) of Paine piercing the skies, a stunning backdrop to the beautiful turquoise waters of the lake. Arrive at Nordenskjold lookout where you will meet the transfer vehicle for the drive across the Park to the immense Glacier and Lake Grey. There head out on foot across the small footbridge before walking through the forest and down to the grey sandy shores of the lake to admire the spectacular and almost surreal views. Measuring 28 km in length and almost 35 metres high this glacier, though fast retreating, remains the largest in the Park. The grey waters of the lake form an interesting contrast to the blue-white icebergs that have broken away from the ice wall and now float on its surface.

Time permitting, those who are interested can join the Grey Boat trip that takes you to the face of the glacier. The cost is payable locally (\$80 per person). Continue by vehicle to the nearby salmon-filled waters of the Serrano River and the comfortable Cabanas del Paine, your base for the night. This area provides some of the best photo backdrops in the Park with the classic yellow pampas in the foreground and the fabulous peaks of the Horns of Paine (los Cuernos) behind. For early risers, it also offers some of the most spectacular sunrises in all of Patagonia. Night Cabanas del Paine. 3-4 hours riding. (B,L,D)



Day 8 - An early start today for the beautiful ride out of Torres del Paine and into the remote and pristine Bernardo O'Higgins National Park. This is a new ride in a virgin area and one where you will see few, if any, people. The Bernardo O'Higgins National Park straddles the regions of Magallanes and Aysen. Not only is it the largest park in Chile, it is one of the three largest national parks in the world. and one of the least explored corners of southern Patagonia due its extreme climate and dramatic location crammed between isolated fjords and the Southern Patagonian Ice Field. The Serrano River flows through some of the greatest scenery on earth and seems to change colour constantly as it joins forces with the Rivers Grey, Tyndall and Geike covering about 36 km of distance before spilling out into Last Hope Sound. Follow this same route with its exquisitely pretty trails and abundance of snow capped peaks, crystal clear lakes and lush green forests, and swim the horses across the ice-cold River Nutria before heading south to the pristine waters of Lago Brush. Stop at a small lakeside 'puesto' for a picnic lunch while the horses rest before continuing on across beautiful meadows with the dramatic mountains of the Chacabuco range looming up to the left. Your destination is the remote Hosteria Balmaceda with incredible views of the Serrano Glacier and only accessible by boat, on foot or on horseback. The night is spent at Balmaceda in comfortable, but basic lodgings in dormitory style rooms. (B,L,D)

Day 9 - After breakfast, a boat trip from Puerto Toro out to two glaciers - the very pretty Serrano Glacier with its meltwater pool and icebergs, and the hanging Balmaceda Glacier that clings to the granite as it spills down the mountainside into the waters of Last Hope Sound below. Return to the dock at Puerto Toro for the boat trip across Last Hope Sound back to Puerto Natales. This is a 3 hour crossing that stops at the remote and beautifully located Estancia Perales for a traditional 'asado' before arriving at the quayside in Puerto Natales at around 6 pm. Night in Puerto Natales in Hotel Weskar or similar. Farewell dinner at one of the excellent restaurants in town. (B,L,D)

Day 10 - After a leisurely morning and lunch (own account) in Puerto Natales, you will be driven back to Punta Arenas via the Magellanic penguin colony at Otway Sound. Late afternoon is a great time to visit and there is plenty of time to observe these enchanting penguins as they criss-cross the tufted heath from their burrows to the sea and back. Own arrangements for dinner, night at Hotel Don Rey Felipe. (B)

Day 11 - Breakfast and your own arrangements for onward travel. (B)

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 Chile for less than three months you do not need to arrange a visa in advance BUT you should always check up to date requirements.

Health Chile is one of the safest countries healthwise in South America. No jabs are required as a condition of entry although the Hospital for Tropical Diseases in London recommend that you ensure you are up to date with Tetanus, Hepatitis A and Typhoid. If you are not up to date with these you should visit your GP or a travel clinic about 4 weeks before departure. If you plan to visit other rural areas before or after the ride you should get further advice - Hepatitis B, TB and Rabies jabs may also be recommended.

(Updated 26/01/12)

