



**Argentinian
Explorer**

ARGENTINA TOURS

ROUTE BLUE PATAGONIA IN 14 DAYS

This is an exclusive journey offered by Argentinian Explorer travelling along all the Atlantic Patagonia. We visit Puerto Madryn and Península Valdés, being the only classic sites of this journey. We continue along little touristic destinations, but full of charm, such as Camarones, Bahía Bustamante, Puerto Deseado, El Jaramillo Petrified Forest and Puerto San Julián. We end up this brilliant journey to the least touristic Patagonia knowing the Monte León National Park lodging in a typical estancia (ranch).

14 DAYS - 13 NIGHTS

- Accommodation in double room with breakfast
- Transfers detailed in the itinerary
- Tours listed in the itinerary (except optional)
- Tickets to Natural Reserves and National Parks included
- Bilingual English Spanish Guide
- 24 hour emergency service

Day 1 - Puerto Madryn

Welcome to Argentina. Reception and transfer from Ezeiza International Airport (Buenos Aires City) to Jorge Newbery Airport in Buenos Aires. Reception and transfer from Puerto Madryn Airport to the Hotel.

Option bus: This program can be by bus, departing from Buenos Aires to Puerto Madryn, with a distance of approx. 1,450 Km and a length of 6 pm. In this case is you must exit the previous day about 12 to 13 hours to be arriving at 8 in the morning of the next day.

Day 2 - City Tour in Puerto Madryn & Sea Lions Watching at Punta Loma

Breakfast at hotel. We begin our day visiting one of the prettiest atlantic cities in Argentina: Puerto Madryn. The principal attraction in the region is the Southern Right whale watching.

We continue our excursion setting off some 17km to the south of the city, where we arrive at the Punta Loma Protected Natural Reserve. This station stands out for being the one hair sea lions chosen place for their habitat, not mentioning that many other whole communities of birds, reptiles and mammals live together, such is the case of cormorants, seagulls, etc.

Optional: Night Patagonia towards the Cerro Avanzado

Free day to know the city. Before the night, we set off to a special crossing trip: Cerro Avanzado some only 20km travelling south of Puerto Madryn, where we perform a unique trip at night under a full moon. We do a mini-trekking where we will learn about the vegetation, the geological formations and discover the maritime fossils remains of the zone. We descend through the shoal towards the end of the great canon, walking along the beach and then we enjoy delicious appetizers with a glass of wine surrounded by nature. The Patagonic sky delights us with all its beauty and we can enjoy the sound and the figures of the Southern Right whale lit up by the moon.

Day 3 - Península Valdés and Whale Watching

Breakfast at the hotel. We will have great excitement on this day. We will set out first thing in the morning towards Península de Valdés, which was declared Natural and Cultural World Heritage by the UNESCO for being one of the few places in the world where you can watch the Southern right whale in its natural habitat. In this place we can find the biggest concentration of sea animals in the entire Atlantic coastline.

We will visit the Interpretation Center in Carlos Ameghino Isthmus, and then we will head for the ecotouristic village of Puerto Pirámides, which is the only urbanized town in the Peninsula. In Pirámides, we will enjoy a spectacular experience watching the whales in their natural habitat, accompanied by whale specialized guides, biologists, and film and naturalist photography teams.

Before starting our voyage, we will provide travelers with a raincoat and a life jacket. We will set out on a motorboat tour around the crystalline waters of Golfo Nuevo (New Gulf) to see the Southern Right Whale. We will have a unique natural experience when the whales make their appearance moving, swiping their tails, blowing air through their holes and jumping. From the end of May to December, whales from Antarctica reach the coasts of Golfo Nuevo (New Gulf) to breed in the coastline of Puerto Pirámides.

Note about the whale watching: It is performed between July and November. Waterproof clothes and windbreakers are recommended. Before the trip, elemental advice is provided. This adventure is available for adults as well as for children.

Day 4 - Punta Tombo, Watching of Toninas Overas & Cabo Dos Bahías Natural Reserve

We will leave Madryn after breakfast towards the south to the Punta Tombo protected area, it is the biggest Magellan penguin reserve with 210 hectares. Its coasts are intangible areas and in February they are covered with penguin chicks. They arrive to mate as from October.

Before we turn off to visit Puerto Rawson, where we embark to watch Toninas Overas. Once we leave the Punta Tombo Natural Reserve, we depart to Camarones, a fishing hamlet 150 km away on the shore of the Camarones Bay, so as to visit the Cabo Dos Bahías Natural Reserve, where we find one of the most diverse marine birds colonies in the world and the important continental penguin colony. Only 2km away there is a natural amphitheatre on the sea where colonies of sea lions of one and two hairs find shelter. We sleep in the Camarones hamlet, capital of salmon.

Note: The Perón Family museum is in Camarones, where he spent his first years of life, his father worked in a nearby estancia next to the hamlet. The original house has corrugated iron walls and wooden doors and has several objects of the family, there are photographs of his childhood, when he was a baby with no clothes, his school years and with his wives. The museum is well-organized and it works as a cultural center.

Day 5 - Bahía Bustamante, the only seaweed town in the world

We set off from Puerto Madryn to know a special place: Bahía Bustamante. It is a private property of almost 80,000 hectares that has a town in a natural environment, in the north of the San Jorge Gulf, between the Patagonian cities of Trelew and Comodoro Rivadavia, area rich in diversity and seldom found in the world for its endless species of birds and marine mammals. In the past, harvesting was on horseback and the town had 500 inhabitants, today they are less than 50.

Its activities are the ovine exploitation (more than 10.000 hectares are dedicated to high quality wool production) and the collection of seaweed. It is the only seaweed town in the world, its streets are dirt roads with the names of seaweeds. The town tranquillity is only interrupted by strong winds and the sound of the waves. The buoy and the church are the only things when looking towards the horizon. The park is enjoyed by the little ones and the Argentine flag moves and tears with the continuous wind. The well-known bar López is testimony of a populated past. Today we feel sleepy because of the loneliness. It is a very special place, an encounter with nature in its pure state.

Day 6 - Bahía Bustamante and seaweed extraction & Península Graviña

We wake up in the town Bahía Bustamante. We start our day with the aim to know the job of extracting seaweed, learning about the different species and their usages in biomedicine or food fields. Seaweeds

have relaxing and softening effects which are excellent for the skin. Almost 88% of seaweeds are made of water, the remaining 12% are minerals, fibers, trace elements and nitrogenous components. Seaweeds have a high contents of potassium, magnesium, iodine, selenium and phosphorus.

Thanks to the beta-carotene they have, seaweeds are excellent antioxidant helping to lower the levels of heart attacks and cancer risks. They also have a low fat and caloric value. For example: from the Gracilaria agar agar is extracted. It is a gelling which solidifies without needing to cool down, then used in food as a natural thickener. Seaweed recollection depends on the species and the zone. Generally nets are used but it can also be through diving.

Nos dirigimos a la Península Graviña para hacer una caminata, andar en 4x4 o cabalgar, se trata de un área de playas de finas arenas protegidas de los fuertes vientos gracias a las grandes rocas rojizas que juegan un especial contraste con el azul profundo del mar. Si hay marea baja se crean grandes piletas naturales donde se puede bañar en época estival. Se llega al faro Aristizabal, a lugares de las antiguas étnias como ser chenques y picaderos y hasta los cañadones. También es posible ir hasta una isla para ver una colonia de pingüinos de Magallanes (sólo en marea baja). Podemos avistar cormoranes, patos vapor, flamencos y lobos marinos en las aguas azules del Mar Argentino.

Day 7 - Sailing along Caleta Malaspina watching marine fauna

Breakfast at hotel. We set off from the town to the south leaving the buoy, the first visible testimony which locates the town from the sea. We go past a zone of stony ground and enter the Graviña peninsula with large beaches of fine sand protected from the wind by the red rocks which mix with the deep blue of the sea. We watch indigenous cemeteries on the peninsula. When the tide lowers, natural pools of water appear. We arrive at a tidal inlet to set sail on a speedboat through prairies of seaweed of Caleta Malaspina and get into the Vernacci archipelago which shelters marine fauna everywhere.

At Roca Malaspina there is a colony with cormorants, sea lions, Magellan penguins, different birds such as skuas, seagulls, small seagulls, plovers, kind of ducks, petrels, etc. While sailing, dolphins swim along with us and if we are lucky and is the season, we might see a killer whale (orca whale) and a Southern Right whale. As one can sail only on high tide and with good sea, it is necessary to define this tour one day before according to the weather forecast and the tides.

Petrified Forest La Piramide

In case of not being able to sail at Caleta Malaspina, the Petrified Forest can be visited. It shelters sequoias of almost 70 million years and it is only 30km away from the town. It is similar to the Valle de la Luna. The plateau where the forest is located belongs to the Tertiary age. Towards the forest we can discover guanacos, foxes, iguanas, mulitas (armadillos) and ñandúes (South American ostrich).

As we go on, we can appreciate the landscape mutation, becoming a desert with lunar characteristics. We walk among pieces of fossil remains, trunks that have become hard rock, once wood. Opal, which stands in for the tree organic matter, gives it a special colour. We appreciate the trees rings representing their growth. The meticulous ones will see the ash layer covering the trunk while fossilization took place. In case sailing along Caleta Malaspina is feasible, both choices are possible.

Day 8 - From Bahía Bustamante to Comodoro Rivadavia

Breakfast in the hotel. We leave Bahía Bustamante to travel to Comodoro Rivadavia 195km away. Transfer to the Comodoro Rivadavia Airport. End of the excursion.

Note: Those who continue with the second part of the program Atlantic Patagonia, go to the bus terminal to take a bus to Puerto Deseado, 290km away. The ones who wish to continue the journey starting the program with Ruta 40 stay at Comodoro Rivadavia.

Day 9 - Navigation along the Ría del Deseado to the Isla del Rey - Charles Darwin's route

Breakfast in the hotel. The Ría Deseado Natural Reserve is 40km long for navigation, where Magellan penguins can be seen on the Isla de los Pájaros, there are also grey and long-necked cormorants, bigua cormorants, oystercatchers, small seagulls, sea lions and among others, we can enjoy the funny and friendly toninas overas. This is a unique kind of ría in South America. It is called Ría because the old river (río) diverted its course and it was occupied by the sea.

We face the encounter with the marine fauna which is sheltered in the Ría Deseado Natural Reserve. We sail on zodiac boats to watch the toninas overas, they are similar to small dolphins and very friendly. On the cliffs we can observe the royal grey cormorants. On the Isla Larga we get to the one hair sea lions station, being able to watch them from very near in their natural habitat.

At our last attractive stop, the Isla de los Pájaros, we can see an important Magellan penguins colony, there are nearly 30,000 in this zone. We disembark to walk along the beach covered with boulder to see the penguins very closely.

We continue with this maritime excursion to Isla del Rey, famous place because in 1616 the Dutch vessel Hoorn belonging to the Le Maire and Schouten expedition set on fire. We descend to trek to the highest place on Cerro Van Noort, where we can have a perfect panoramic sight of all the Ría Deseado. We have lunch on the beach and then return to land. During our voyage we will probably have toninas jumping on both sides of our zodiac. This region is one of the places with most diversity of fauna in all the Atlantic Coast, in addition, as it is not a promoted destination, there is a lot of bird fauna.

Option: Charles Darwin's route - We do the same navigation along the Ría Deseado but instead of going to Isla del Rey, we go by the Charles Darwin's route to go along the Ría from end to end. The famous English naturalist Charles Darwin, travelled this same route in 1833, during captain Fitz Roy expedition so define the place where they would camp. One member of the group, Conrad Martens, left drawings with this place marked.

We sail some 45 minutes along the narrow canyon of the Río Deseado, where the typical landscape and fauna of the Patagonian steppe starts to be seen. We get off to trek towards Darwin's lookout points, inside the Estancia La Aurora, where we will enjoy a fantastic view of the ría. It was here that Darwin expressed his famous statement, written in his famous book *The Origin of Species*: "[I don't think to have ever seen a more isolated place from the rest of the world in a rock crack in the middle of an immense plateau than this one](#)". After lunch we return to the pier.

Day 10 - Expedition to the Pingüino de Penacho Amarillo Island

Breakfast in the hotel. The northernmost colony of yellow plume penguins are in Isla Pingüino (Penguin Island), sharing the habitat with Magellan penguins, royal cormorants, sea lions, southern seagulls, etc. The most important Imperial Cormorants' colony in all Patagonia is in the Chata Island. Today the aim is to visit the only reserve of yellow plume penguins in all the Atlantic Coast. To be able to do this, we start a 1 hour voyage in open waters, through pure adventure, avoiding waves and moving through the rough winds.

We disembark on the Isla Pingüino and after a small lunch we go to meet the Yellow Plume penguin, being able to observe it very close to us. We stroll through rocky surface, beside the Magellan penguins and with skúas flying low. We can see the historical lighthouse quite abandoned, the ruins of an old sea lions school and we get near to a small bay where there are sea lions of one hair. We have lunch on the beach and when returning we pay attention to see if we could watch the toninas overas, the southern dolphins and the emblematic flights of petrels and albatrosses.

Day 11 - Jaramillo Petrified Forest

Breakfast in the hotel. We leave Puerto Deseado to go towards the Jaramillo Petrified Forest, near 250km away. It is the most important fossil site in Patagonia. We walk among fossilized araucaria trunks of more than 90 million years old, some of them are still standing in spite of the age. Inside the park we can see trunks of more than 30 meters long and 2 meters diameter.

When this forest was created, the Cordillera de los Andes didn't exist and the influence of the Pacific winds was fundamental, generating a lush vegetation. This reserve was created with the only aim to preserve the paleontological site so it can be useful for scientific studies of this place. When the Cordillera Andina was formed, due to the volcano activities, some vegetation and fauna of the Patagonian zone, started disappearing giving place to the barren landscape of today. This forest is product of the changing process in the Devonian period, some 300 million years ago.

We continue southwards to arrive at Puerto San Julián, 230km away. Puerto San Julián was visited by Charles Darwin, Hernando de Magallanes and by the British corsair Francis Drake. The first Spanish colonies in the Patagonia, arrived at these lands: Florida Blanca. San Julián was declared Historical Site in 1943, it is on a bay, 350km north of Río Gallegos, between Cabo Curioso and Punta Desengaño. What is characteristic of this place is its wide avenues, low houses and particularly for the Rosa Novak Modern Art Regional Museum, where archeological and paleontological pieces are displayed. The Regional Museum in Marine Art is located here too.

Day 12 - San Julián Bay up to Cormorant Island

Breakfast in the hotel. We embark to sail along the San Julián Bay up to Isla Justicia. Two captains were killed under Magellan's orders in 1520 and another one was beheaded under Drake's orders on this island. En spite of these tragical stories, the place has a great diversity of birds and fauna where we can watch small seagulls, cormorants, skuas and oystercatchers.

The second stop during the navigation is on Isla Cormorán, where more than 120,000 Magellan penguins live. We can see toninas overas, the end of the world dolphins as some people call them, these give a special show with their jumpings and their fast movements, the scenario is completed with petrels, seagulls and a maritime landscape that tells us that we are very near to the end of the world.

Optionals in Puerto San Julián: We can visit on our own the first Spanish settlement "Floridablanca" or the British meat packing plant "Swift", now abandoned. Another possibility is to visit Nao Victoria, a replica of the "flagship" vessel which belonged to Hernando de Magallanes who stopped at the city of Puerto San Julián in his first voyage around the world.

Day 13 - Estancia Monte León

Breakfast in the hotel. Transfer to Estancia Monte León during the first hours in the morning (around 150km away). Before midday we are welcomed at the estancia. The Estancia Monte León is located inside the Monte León National Park, in Santa Cruz (Argentine Republic). Towards the estancia, we go past the town Commander Luis Piedrabuena. Before midday we are received in the estancia.

Once on the estancia, we can do any of the following activities during the afternoon: go to the river bank of Río Santa Cruz to practise fly-fishing. The mountain thaw flows into this river as well as the water courses which flow into the Viedma and Argentino Lakes. We can find abundant criollas trouts called perca, arco iris trouts and also salmon and sea bass. On Monte León island one can fish silverside (sand smelt), finding seafood, mussels and spider crabs too. Another option is to sail north or south the river from Pavón island depending on the Patagonian winds and the tide found. There is another possible adventure remaining more time on the estancia to live this unique journey along the Río Santa Cruz, following Charles Darwin's footprints.

Monte León is a synonym of pure nature in Southern Patagonia. Its beaches on the Atlantic Ocean, its high cliffs and strange caves together with its wild plateau and hills with queer formations carved by the wind erosion, are the natural shelter to an amazing biodiversity. There are penguin colonies, cetacean and sea lions, together with mammals such as pumas and guanacos, birds such as the roquero cormorant, the South American small seagull, the Southern seagull and the cocinera seagull and black oystercatchers and grey and imperial cormorants as well as invertebrates.

Hostería Monte León The hostelry has a very English style, built at the beginning of the 20th Century. It has a drawing room looking to the north, a library with books about Patagonia and an austere but interesting museum. Its rooms are very big and with excellent heating.

Day 14 - Río Gallegos

Breakfast in the estancia. Depending on the time of the flight that takes off from Río Gallegos, we depart from the estancia along 200km which separate this Patagonian paradise from the International Airport of Río Gallegos. End of program.

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