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An Insider's Guide to Where to Stay & Go in Chilean Patagonia

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Travel Advisor

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Chilean Patagonia is the ultimate escape for those who crave adventure and untouched landscapes. Positioned at the southern tip of South America, Chilean Patagonia is on the

western side of the Andes, while Argentinian Patagonia is positioned on the east. Picture jagged mountain peaks, crystal blue glaciers and dramatic sunsets. The culture here is a mix of frontier spirit and deep-rooted traditions, with a strong connection to the land.

If you've got a passion for adventure paired with stunning remote scenery, Chilean Patagonia is the ideal destination. And you don't have to rough it. Offering a range of styles, lodges respect the pristine terrain by prioritizing sustainability, while not sacrificing style and comfort. Imagine days filled with horseback rides, treks and wildlife spotting, then returning to your lodge to unwind fireside with a glass of Chilean wine.

To get the most out of this stunning destination, plan to visit at least two different areas of Patagonia. I've tapped my extensive network to put together the insider tips for where to go and stay in Patagonia, plus the best add-on destinations if you want to extend your trip.

Need to know



Traveling to Patagonia is a big deal. Flights are long (12+ hours), and weather can be unpredictable, so it's important to set realistic expectations and plan well. Most travelers start

their adventure by flying into Santiago (SCL) because there are no direct flights from the US to Patagonia. The quickest route is typically via Santiago, with a domestic flight to Punta Arenas (PUQ) or Puerto Natales (PNT), depending on your itinerary. Travel times can be long, but I can recommend the best routes for your itinerary.

- **Currency:** The Chilean Peso (CLP) is the official currency; cash is essential in remote areas.
- **Languages:** Spanish is the official language; basic English is spoken in tourist areas.
- **Airports:** Major entry points include Punta Arenas (PUQ) and Puerto Natales (PNT).
- **Transportation:** Rental cars and guided tours are common, with limited or non-existent public transport in remote areas. Lodges also can arrange private transportation.
- **Best time to visit:** October to April offers the best weather and longer days for outdoor activities. During this period, temperatures range from 40°F to 65°F (4°C to 18°C).
- **Ideal length of stay:** A minimum of 7–10 days is recommended to fully explore the region.
- **Signature dishes:** Patagonian lamb, king crab and calafate berry desserts are local specialties.
- **Key phrases:** “¿Dónde está?” (Where is it?), “Gracias” (Thank you) and “¿Habla inglés?” (Do you speak English?).
- **What to wear:** Layers are key — think waterproof jackets, thermal wear and sturdy hiking boots.

Where to stay



Images courtesy of Explora Torres Del Paine

Patagonia has distinct regions that each have their own personality. On the northern edge of Patagonia, **Puerto Varas** is part of the Lake District and is a great stop on the way from Santiago to parts further south. Known for its German architecture and vibrant culture, Puerto Varas offers quaint streets, hikes on volcanic slopes and kayaking on the lake before continuing your journey. **Torres del Paine** is what most people imagine when thinking about Patagonia — towering granite peaks, impressive glaciers, and diverse wildlife are all part of the experience here. A great pairing with a land adventure is a cruise launching from Punta Arenas, where you'll experience nearby penguin colonies and the legendary Strait of Magellan.

Here are some of my favorite lodges, hotels and cruises across Chilean Patagonia.

Hotel Awa: A striking lakeside retreat with contemporary design and superb views of Lake Llanquihue and the Osorno Volcano.

Explora Torres Del Paine: Gorgeous eco-lodge in a remote lakeside setting with spectacular mountain views and guided horseback day trips. Book with Fora to receive perks like a \$100 credit, daily breakfast and an upgrade whenever available.

Awasi Patagonia: Hillside getaway with standalone villas, private guided day trips and gourmet cuisine, plus stellar views of Torres del Paine.

The Singular Patagonia, Chile: Historic hotel with industrial charm and panoramic views of Last Hope Sound. Enjoy gourmet dining and luxury amenities. Book with Fora to receive perks such as a \$100 food & beverage credit, breakfast daily and an upgrade based on availability.

Tierra Patagonia: Eco-friendly lodge with stunning views of Torres del Paine. Offers guided excursions and a full-service spa. Book with Fora to receive perks such as a complimentary 50 minute massage, breakfast daily, an upgrade and extended check-in/out.

Explora Patagonia National Park: Luxury lodge in Patagonia National Park, perfect for immersive outdoor adventures. Enjoy guided hikes and wildlife viewing with top-tier service. Fora's partner perks include a \$100 hotel credit, breakfast daily, an upgrade and extended check-in/out.

Eleven Rio Palena Lodge, Patagonia: Exclusive lodge on the Rio Palena, ideal for fly-fishing and personalized outdoor adventures.

Australis Cruises: Expedition ship with world-class dining, personalized service and up-close encounters with nature, making it ideal for multi-generational trips and group travel. Fora's perks include a bottle of wine and a complimentary stateroom upgrade at the time of check-in whenever possible.

History and culture



Chilean Patagonia's history is a blend of ancient traditions, exploration and survival that makes it an intriguing destination. Indigenous groups like the Tehuelche, Mapuche and Kawésqar were the first to call this rugged land home, living with strong spiritual ties to the land. When European explorers (most notably Ferdinand Magellan) arrived in the 16th century, Patagonia's remote wilderness started to gain international attention, an interest that continued when adventurers like Charles Darwin passed through the region.

Landmarks like the Cueva del Milodón, where the remains of giant sloths were found, and the dramatic peaks of Torres del Paine, which were sacred to the indigenous people, highlight the deep history and natural beauty of Chilean Patagonia. Despite ongoing modernization, the

indigenous communities have managed to preserve much of their culture. Today, the Mapuche and other groups continue to play a vital role in the region, advocating for their rights and protecting their cultural heritage, though they still face challenges such as land disputes and social marginalization. For travelers, visiting Patagonia offers not just the majestic landscapes but also a chance to connect with the enduring spirit of its original inhabitants, whose traditions add a rich layer to the experience of this wild, captivating land.

Activities and excursions



Images courtesy of Awasi Patagonia

Puerto Varas

- Take a leisurely walk along the waterfront in Puerto Varas, and enjoy fresh, local dishes at restaurants with views of Lake Llanquihue. The town's plazas are perfect for unwinding while taking in the scenery, with the Osorno Volcano as a stunning backdrop.
- Check out the Iglesia del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús, a nod to the town's German roots, and swing by the Museo Pablo Fierro to explore a quirky collection of local art and cultural history.
- Book a private tour to Osorno Volcano, where you can either hike the trails or drive up to the ski center for some incredible views. Afterward, relax in the thermal waters at Termas de Puyehue, surrounded by lush greenery.

- To get out on the water, hire a boat for a tour of Lake Todos los Santos. You'll find secluded beaches and stunning viewpoints along the way. End your day with a wine tasting at a local vineyard, pairing Chilean wines with delicious bites.

Torres del Paine

- Hike to the base of Torres del Paine for some epic views of the famous granite towers. If you're after something more laid-back, go on a private wildlife tour to spot pumas, guanacos and condors with an expert guide.
- Take a boat tour on Lago Grey to see the impressive Grey Glacier up close, or explore the Patagonian steppe on horseback with experienced baqueanos for an authentic experience.
- Capture the landscapes with just the right angle and lighting on a private photography tour.
- For a different perspective, lift off on a private helicopter tour over the park's dramatic scenery or cap off your day with a stargazing session under some of the world's darkest skies.

Punta Arenas

- Make the most of a cruise's land and sea components like hiking to Cape Horn for gorgeous ocean views, and navigating Glacier Alley to witness towering glaciers up close.
- Visit Wulaia Bay to learn about indigenous history while enjoying sweeping fjord views.
- Trek through the untouched forests of Tierra del Fuego, encountering diverse wildlife.
- Cruise the Beagle Channel, spotting sea lions and dolphins.
- Enhance your journey with a zodiac excursion to remote islands, bringing you closer to Patagonia's unique ecosystems.
- Don't forget to savor the simple beauty of the daily sunset from the ship's deck.

Add-on destinations



It takes a long time to travel to Patagonia, so it makes sense to add on another nearby destination to make the most of your trip. Connect with me about extending your trip to include one (or more) of these beautiful spots.

- **Easter Island, Chile (5-hour flight):** For a completely unique experience, fly to Easter Island to explore its mysterious Moai statues, volcanic landscapes and rich Polynesian culture.
- **Buenos Aires, Argentina (4-hour flight):** Immerse yourself in tango, vibrant neighborhoods and rich cultural experiences in Argentina's lively capital.
- **Tierra del Fuego, Argentina (2-hour flight):** Extend your journey to the southernmost tip of South America with a visit to Tierra del Fuego and Ushuaia, the gateway to Antarctica.
- **Pucón, Chile (2-hour flight):** Explore this adventure hub in the Chilean Lake District, offering everything from hot springs and volcano hikes to water sports on Lake Villarrica.
- **Valparaíso & Viña del Mar, Chile (1.5-hour flight + drive):** Enjoy a coastal escape with colorful Valparaíso and the beachside resort of Viña del Mar, easily reached from Santiago.

- **El Calafate, Argentina (1.5-hour flight):** Visit the gateway to Los Glaciares National Park and marvel at the famous Perito Moreno Glacier, a must-see natural wonder in southern Patagonia.

To get started on your South American adventure, connect with me and I'll customize an itinerary tailored to your travel style.

Get in touch with Gregory

Reach out for travel inspiration, hotel bookings or customized itineraries.

Please provide some details about your trip.

You can expect a response from Gregory within 1–2 business days. You'll also be subscribed to our traveler newsletter (you can unsubscribe at any time).

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