

A full-page background image showing a majestic mountain range with sharp, rocky peaks. Some peaks are partially covered in snow or ice. In the foreground, there's a calm lake reflecting the sky, surrounded by low-lying, scrubby vegetation. The sky is filled with heavy, grey clouds, creating a moody atmosphere.

# Buenos Aires, Patagonia & Santiago

Itinerary and Travel Tips

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## Itinerary and Travel Tips

*by*  
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### Note from the author

We went to South America with our three adult children and their spouses over the Christmas-New Year holidays. This was summer and peak season in the Southern Hemisphere. I was pleased with the pace of the trip as well as the variety of scenery and activities.

People who are interested in multi-day trekking might prefer something different, but for our group, this was about right. I hope this information helps you in planning a trip that surely belongs on your bucket list!

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Anne

## 14 Day Itinerary

Day	Location	Activities	Hotel	Notes
1	Buenos Aires	Arrive Buenos Aires	<a href="#">Fierro Hotel</a>	
2	Buenos Aires	Private city tour	Fierro Hotel	<a href="#">Maria Corbalan Bespoke Tours</a>
3	Buenos Aires		Fierro Hotel	
4	Fly to El Calafate		<a href="#">El Esplendor</a>	Request lake view (see notes)
5	El Calafate	<a href="#">Perito Moreno Glacier</a>	El Esplendor	
6	El Calafate	<a href="#">El Chaltén</a>	El Esplendor	
7	Drive to TdP	Private transport to TdP ~4 hr	<a href="#">EcoCamp</a>	Unique "glamping" experience
8	Torres del Paine	our choice	EcoCamp	
9	Torres del Paine	our choice	EcoCamp	
10	Torres del Paine	our choice	EcoCamp	



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11	Punta Arenas	Drive to Punta Arenas ~4 hr	<a href="#">Rey don Felipe</a>	Not many hotel options in Punta Arenas
12	Punta Arenas/ Santiago	See penguins on <a href="#">Magdalena Island</a> , then fly to Santiago	<a href="#">Cumbres Lastarria</a>	Boutique hotel in funky neighborhood
13	Santiago		Cumbres Lastarria	
14	Santiago		Cumbres Lastarria	



## Travel Tips

- I worked with a travel agent, but in fact you can coordinate this trip on your own. If you use a travel agent, be sure to ask questions and know what they're selling you. Everyone gets a cut, of course. Our US travel agent worked with local agencies in Argentina and Chile to book tours and hotels. The local agencies in turn worked with actual tour operators. Everyone in the chain has a website with contact information, however. So if you want to email places on your own, that's totally feasible.
- We traveled with the attitude that, since we'd already paid so much to fly South America, we weren't interested in saving money here and there if it meant waiting around or having a sub-par experience. Thus, for example, we took a chartered van for the 8 of us from El Calafate, Argentina to EcoCamp, in Chile. This saved us about 3 hours, since we were able to stay with a single vehicle and also go through immigration and customs with a much smaller group. It was also a more pleasant way to travel.
- The principal attraction of our hotel in El Calafate ([El Esplendor](#)) was its location above the town, giving it a vista over Lake Argentina. If you stay there, make sure to reserve a lake view room. Also know that you can request a fan if your room is hot (we didn't figure this out until our last night!). The [Posada Los Alamos](#) was located in town and looked very nice from the outside. If I went back, I'd try to stay there.
- The tour company our agent worked with on the Argentinian side of Patagonia was [Kallpa Tours](#). We bought the excursion to El Chaltén ourselves from [Criollos](#), a tour operator with an office in El Calafate.
  - All tours for mini-trekking on the Perito Moreno glacier are done through [Hielo y Aventura](#) ("Ice and Adventure"), regardless of who books the excursion for you.
  - If you're going during peak season, make sure to get tickets for mini-trekking ahead of time.
- The company who did our private transfer from El Calafate, Argentina to Torre del Paine, Chile was [Wildlife Adventure](#). They offered us a comfortable van, friendly and professional driver who even stopped by a pharmacy for us along the way!

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- The tour operator on the Chilean side was [Casacada Expediciones](#). I had to clarify an issue with our itinerary on New Year's Day, and their emergency call center handled my concerns promptly and professionally. They are a partner of EcoCamp and also the company you'd be contacting in order to book EcoCamp on your own.
- We really enjoyed [EcoCamp](#). Their Suite Domes are particularly spacious and comfortable, with private bathrooms. They serve three meals a day, which usually includes a sack lunch because you are out on an excursion. There is a lot of choice in what you'll eat, and the vegetables were the freshest we had in Patagonia. Wonderful bilingual guides lead a selection of easy, medium or challenging excursions every day. You can choose what you're in the mood to do.
  - There aren't many in-park lodging options at Torres del Paine, and most of them are expensive. Other hotels include [Tierra Patagonia](#) (used by National Geographic Expeditions), [Hotel las Torres](#), and [Explora](#), the highest-end property inside the park.
  - You can save money by staying in the town of Puerto Natales. But you'll add 1.5+ hours *each way* onto your plans for visiting the park. For us, being in the heart of Torres del Paine and the experience of staying at EcoCamp were entirely worth the cost.



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- The only reason we traveled as far south as Punta Arenas was to see the penguin colony on Magdalena Island. You can fly out of Puerto Natales and thus save yourself 2 hours of driving. But the penguins were fascinating, and the tour brought us very close to them. The actual tour operator for our excursion to Magdalena Island was [Solo Expediciones](#).
  - They preferred to book people on their 6 am tour, but I pushed back and was able to get a 10 am departure. Which was full, by the way.
  - FYI folks will probably scramble for preferential seating on the boat, but it doesn't matter where you sit – you can't see much from the boat anyway. And everyone gets to walk around on the island!



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**Good luck planning this incredible trip.  
I hope you enjoy it as much as we did!**





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