



EXPEDITION ITINERARY

AYSEN GLACIER TRAIL

DAY ONE

Your trip begins by meeting your guides and the rest of the group in either Coyhaique or Balmaceda airport. We will travel by truck to Puerto Bertrand, moving down the breathtaking Carretera Austral (Southern Highway), the region's main road.

Intermittent stops will allow us to enjoy stunning overviews of the jagged Cerro Castillo mountain range and Lago General Carrera, a vast blue expanse of water that is South America's second largest lake.

After about six hours of driving, we'll arrive in Puerto Bertrand (pop. 65), a tiny village situated at the headwaters of Chile's most voluminous river, the Rio Baker. We'll gather over a welcome dinner with the guide team, discuss the trek ahead, and answer any lingering questions, and then retire for a night of rest in cabins on the river shore.

(Included: Lunch, Dinner, Cabin accommodations)



DAY TWO

After breakfast, we'll perform our final preparations and packing for the journey ahead, then board boats for a one hour crossing of the emerald blue Lago Bertrand and Lago Plomo.

We'll meet up with the horse team here to off load some of the luggage before a 4-hour hike, traversing the flanks of the Soler mountain range above the river of the same name and then dropping down to Camp 1 of the AGT, which overlooks the majestic junction of three glacial valleys.

Unstructured time in the afternoon will give us room to explore around camp, spot condors soaring overhead, and get organized for our first night on the trail.

Stats: 350 meter ascent, 100 meter descent, 10 kilometers, 4 hours.

(Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Camp 1 AGT)



DAY THREE

Today we will continue up Soler Valley, dropping down to the valley floor and crossing the hanging glaciers that we'd looked out on the night before.

We'll cross bridges over free-flowing rivers, do a bit of scrambling over rocky crags, hike across white sand beaches, and finally enter the old growth Northafagus forest of the PAEX-owned Palomar Ranch, the last outpost of human habitation in the Soler Valley.

Stats: 300 meters ascent and 300 meters descent, 18 kilometers, 7 hours.

(Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Camp 2 AGT Palomar)



DAY FOUR

After leaving Palomar early morning and walking through the old growth forests of Northofagus we climb up 200 meters to the northern margin of the Nef Glacier.

With crampons we cross the 7-kilometer wide glacier. Our route does not require advanced technical skills, but this is a long and hard day, especially getting off the glacier over the detritus and rock covered ice on the glacier's moraine.

Descending the south side of the glacier we climb up to the mirrored lakes and camp in a protected mature forest overlooking the Nef Glacier.

Stats: 400 meters ascent, 100 meters descent, 14 kilometers, including 6 - 8 kilometers on the glacier, 10 hours.

(Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Camp 3 AGT)



DAY FIVE

This is a flex day. It can be spent relaxing on the pristine shores of Laguna Espejo, enjoying the views and the opportunity to reflect on where we are.

Or, for those wanting a more active day, a climb is available to the Mirador summit (1734m) for expansive views of the 3 glaciers (Nora, Cachet and Nef) that fill the valleys in this corner of the Northern Patagonian Ice Field.

This day is also a reserve day should we need to delay our glacier crossing on Day 4 because of inclement weather.

(Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Camp 3 AGT)



DAY SIX

We will now descend the Buena Cueva Valley, passing through more majestic beech forest, Cypress filled wetlands, and huge boulder fields. We'll lunch with two major glaciers in view on a fascinating shelf of the old lake level.

After lunch we will traverse the shores of Lake Cachet II, passing over a difficult stretch of talus. The Cachet camp is 100 meters above the lake and faces the Colonia Glacier that carves off with unannounced regularity. This lake has recently been active sending out GLOF's, Glacial Lake Outburst Floods and is a striking example of the effects of global climate change on the glaciers in this temperate region.

Because this area of the route is constantly in flux, we will choose our path according to the current conditions, with safety always our first priority.

Stats: 200m descent, 100 ascent, 10 kilometers, 7 hours.

(Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Camp 4 AGT)



DAY SEVEN

The day begins amongst glacial kettles and drumlins with constant views of icebergs and the 50 meter ice wall of the glacier. The trail continues into the old growth beech forest above a 200 meter deep canyon with a booming river when the Lago Cachet Dos is full and an emerald green rivulet when the lake is empty.

Today is an “up and down” day, walking roller coaster hills that will reward the physical strength we’ve built up over the previous week. The night is spent overlooking the 3 kilometer wide terminus of the Colonia Glacier with Lago Colonia beyond.

Stats: 300m ascent and descent, 10 kilometers, 6 hours.

(Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Camp 5 AGT)



DAY EIGHT

After hiking down to the moss-covered beach between Colonia glacier and Colonia lake, the trail follows tracks of the endangered huemul deer – an icon of this region – to the northern shore of Lago Colonia.

A boat ride across the lake below 50m + waterfalls to the south shore is followed by an hour walk to Camp at the Sol de Mayo Ranch, where rustic showers and an exquisite meal await us.

Stats: 250 meters descent, 6 kilometers, 3 hours, 30 minute boat ride.

(Included: Breakfast, Lunch, and a celebratory dinner, Camping at Sol de Mayo)



DAY NINE

After a stout breakfast at Sol de Mayo, we hike an hour to the Rio Colonia. Here we cross the glacial river in a large oar raft to the north side. One more hour walking over a wide open rocky beach gets us to the Rinconada where we have our trucks waiting.

The drive back through the Colonia Norte takes approximately 3.5 hours over unimproved ranch roads, back roads and finally the Carretera Austral. This is a big transition day and offers a gradual return into human inhabitation. The night's lodging at the Green Baker Lodge affords everyone a chance to shower, bathe, and relax along the shores of the Río Baker.

Stats: 6 kilometers, 2 hours, 3.5 hour car ride

(Included: B, L, D, Puerto Bertrand)



DAY TEN

The return journey takes about 5 hours back to either Balmaceda for return flights or to Coyhaique, the regional capital.

We can provide optional charter flights from Cochrane for anyone wishing to over-fly the route you have hiked or visit Laguna San Rafael Glacier on the Pacific coast.

PAEX services end in either Coyhaique or Balmaceda unless you have arranged further services with us.

