

## **10 DAY CENTRAL PATAGONIA CRUISE**

### **Caleta Tortel to Puerto Natales**

Vast, exotic, wild and infinite in its beauty. That's how Patagonia was described by the explorers who arrived here almost 500 years ago. Little has changed to this day. Visitors will discover a truly unspoiled wilderness of mountains, fjords, glaciers, forests and steppes.

For a real once-in-a-lifetime adventure, exploring the southernmost extreme of the American continent, navigating through countless sea fjords and channels and crossing the famous Straits of Magellan before setting sail for Antarctica, is an experience that visitors will never forget in their life.

Visitors can marvel at the imposing millennial glaciers (of which there are hundreds) and experience close encounters with whales, dolphins, penguins and killer whales. They can even make Cape Horn – the southernmost tip of the continent – their destination, or continue by sea to Antarctica – truly a scientific and ecological treasure.

The countless islands, channels, inlets, glaciers and coves along the southern Patagonia of Chile between Puerto Montt and Puerto Williams can satisfy the thirst for discovery of even the most curious navigator. The landmarks found on the charts bear the names of mystical propensities: Cape Horn, Tierra del Fuego, Patagonia, Magellan Strait, Drake Passage, Beagle Canal, and many more. The navigators who sailed these waters are among the greatest of all time: Fernando Magallanes, Francis Drake, James Cook, Louis A. de Bougainville, Robert Fitz Roy, Charles Darwin, Joshua Slocum, Vito Dumas, Peter Blake to name a few.

A world of stunning beauty with the imposing backdrop of the Andes will be the sailor's constant companion. However, the real surprises will be provided by the great variety of landscapes, the wilderness, which remains very much as it was, when first seen by man, the numerous species of plants and animals, and the people themselves, whose natural sense of solidarity has been further strengthened by the great loneliness and harsh climate of the region.

Throughout the centuries of heroic sailing off Patagonia and Cape Horn runs the constant thread of association with strong winds and heavy gales – hardly a reputation to lure small yachts. Nevertheless, more and more crews have left the boring and steamy tropics to steer their vessels bravely south. Better knowledge of meteorology, together with the improved technologies of boat building and handling, have greatly increased the confidence of sailors and widened the horizon of their routes, to include areas considered among the worst in the planet. These seas are now faced with increasing tranquility, a trend clearly demonstrated by numbers. This is proven by the increasing number of yachts that visit Patagonia each year and return mesmerized by the natural beauty of the places they visit

The Chilean Patagonia is delimited by the city of Puerto Montt in the north and Puerto Williams in the south. These cities are separated by almost 1,000 miles as the crow flies, but by close to 1,300 nautical miles of navigation through some of the most breath-taking views on this planet.

## GETTING THERE

To visit Patagonia on a 10 day cruise, the first decision that has to be made is to visit northern, central or southern Patagonia, as in this period of time yachts will not be able to cover all of Patagonia, with all the sights that this amazing region has to offer. To visit all of Patagonia from Puerto Montt to Cape Horn, an 18-21 day cruise is recommended.

## CENTRAL PATAGONIA

Central Patagonia extends from the city of Coyhaique on the northern side to the city of Puerto Natales on the southern side.

The general features of this area are high mountains, steep abrupt shores and a view of majestic grandeur. The Continental Icecap (Campo de Hielo or Hielo Continental) follows the channels for most of the way with its eternal glaciers, which often end their slow flow by thundering into the head of the inlets with a power rarely seen elsewhere. Good and safe anchorages are available and captains can be reasonably certain that find a safe spot every 3 or 4 miles to be protected in case of bad weather.

The cruise starts with arrival at Coyhaique airport via private/chartered flight or commercial flight to Aerodromo Balmaceda (BBA). From there transfer to Caleta Tortel by helicopter or chartered airplane that can land at Caleta Tortel airfield (600 x 18 meters / 1,970 x 59 feet). Distance between Coyhaique and Caleta Tortel is 430 km / 267 mi on rural roads, so it takes 10 to 12 hours by land from Coyhaique airport to Caleta Tortel.



*Wooden walkways in Caleta Tortel built with guaytecas wood*

**DAY 1: CALETA TORTEL TO GLACIAR BERNARDO (90 NM / 9 hrs)**

Caleta Tortel is a coastal village and is located between the mouth of the Rio Baker the largest river in Chile and a small embayment of the Baker Channel. The surrounding geography is rugged, formed by a number of islands, fjords, channels and estuaries. The village was founded in 1955 to exploit the cypress de las guaytecas (guaytecas cypress - *pilgerodendron uviferum*) wood that was abundant in the area. The timber business accounts for most of the economy in Tortel to this day. For most of its history the village had only air and boat access; the road was constructed only in 2003, and connects Caleta Tortel with the Carretera Austral. Caleta Tortel consists mainly of stilt houses, typical of Chilotan architecture, built along the coast for several kilometers. There are no conventional streets - instead there are wooden walkways build with Guaitecas Cypress. The wooden walkways give the village its distinctive look and its unique culture.



*Caleta Tortel*

The cruise begins with navigation towards the west on Canal Baker and south on Canal Messier to Isla Farquhar to visit Ventisquero Bernardo.

Bernardo Glacier is one of the largest glaciers in the Southern Patagonian Ice Field and is within the Parque Nacional Bernardo O'Higgins. The glacier flows westward into Bernardo Fjord.



*Glaciar Bernardo*

Parque Nacional Bernardo O'Higgins is the largest national park of the country, covering two regions of Chile with a total surface of 3.6 million hectares / 8.9 million acres. The park has a unique beauty that protects a spectacular landscape, remaining of the glacial era, the South Patagonian ice field, one of the greater fresh water reserves of the planet. By its great amount of channels and fjords, Bernardo O'Higgins National Park constitutes one of the more important wild areas of the Region of Magallanes. Many of the glaciers can be accessed only by vessel or helicopter.

**ACTIVITIES/SIGHTS:** [Kayaking](#), [stand-up paddle](#), [photography](#), [helicopter sight-seeing](#).

## **DAY 2: GLACIAR BERNARDO TO PUERTO EDEN (40 NM / 4 hrs)**

Navigate south on the Messier Channel passing through Angostura Inglesa (English Narrow) named after the English schooner Adelaide during its search for a southbound passage in the summer of 1830. On the way the rests of MV Capitan Leonidas can be seen as an almost eerie ghost ship navigating the channel. MV Capitan Leonidas was a cargo vessel that went aground on rocks in 1963 when the captain tried to sink it to claim insurance. The 'sinking' went wrong, the captain eventually went to prison and lost his captains license for life.

On the way, vessels can also divert into 'Seno Iceberg', which is a 19 km / 12 mile long inlet that ends against a huge ice barrier, one of the tongues of the Continental Icecap.

Puerto Eden is a small and isolated town, of barely 250 people living there all year, a few of them are the last members of Kawescar or Alacalufe descent, the native people of this region. Today, Puerto Eden survives to protect this ethnic group, which was driven to this small place of land after the conquerors arrived in the 1930s. Puerto Eden is the last town between Puerto Montt and

Puerto Natales and is located on Wellington Island, therefore, is only possible to get there by water.

Because of its isolation and distance, Puerto Eden is a real paradise to practice a more adventurous type of tourism. It has mountains, canals and millenary ice floes, where it is possible to fish, ride on a canoe and get to know the culture of this small place, whose singular beauty, is demanding to be photographed as much as possible, with its little corners and rounds, all of which tell the world of the simplicity of life.



*Puerto Eden*

**ACTIVITIES/SIGHTS:** Kayaking, stand-up paddle, fishing, trekking, photography, helicopter sight-seeing.

### **DAY 3: PUERTO EDEN TO VENTISQUERO PIO XI (55 NM / 6 hrs)**

Navigate south and enter the Grappler Channel towards the southeast to enter the Eyre Sound and head northeast towards Ventisquero Pio XI glacier, without a doubt one of the main attractions of Bernardo O'Higgins National Park. Seno Eyre is a deep inlet which extends inland for 32 kilometers / 20 miles and ends at the face of Ventisquero Pio XI, one of the largest Patagonian tidewater glaciers flowing down the Continental Ice Cap covering a surface of approximately 204,000 hectares / 503,000 acres. The face is about 70 meters / 230 feet high and over 3.5 kilometers / 2.2 miles wide and it advances about 20 cms / 7 inches daily. Huge blocks of ice are continuously discharged into the sea with thundering power and making waves of sometimes up to 9 meters / 30 feet. The resulting bergy bits are pushed by winds and currents as far down as Canal Wide, especially in autumn. The scenery is majestic and visitors tell of emotions conjuring comparable only by those from visits to Antarctica.

Ventisquero Pio XI was named in 1928 in honor of Pope Pio XI, a hardy mountaineer, by Italian father Alberto Maria De Agostini during his expedition to Seno Eyre and the Patagonian Icecap. Also known as Brüggen Glacier, Ventisquero Pío XI, is the largest western outflow from the Southern Patagonian Ice Field. Now about 66 kilometers / 41 miles in length, it is the longest glacier in the southern hemisphere outside Antarctica. Unlike most glaciers worldwide, it advanced significantly from 1945 to 1976, surging 5 kilometers / 3.1 miles across the Eyre Fjord during this time, reaching the western shore by 1962 and cutting off Lago Greve from the sea. The glacier continued advancing both northward and southward in the fjord to near its present

position before stabilizing. The growth covers a distance of more than 10 kilometers / 6.2 miles north to south, adding nearly 6,000 hectares / 14,800 acres of ice.



*Ventisquero Pio XI*

Seno Eyre was explored by Lieutenant Kirke in 1830 and named the inlet after Sir George Eyre, who at the time was in command of the British South American fleet, which was quartered in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

**ACTIVITIES/SIGHTS:** [Kayaking](#), [stand-up paddle](#), [photography](#), [helicopter sight-seeing](#).

#### **DAY 4: VENTISQUERO PIO XI TO ISLA MADRE DE DIOS (70 NM / 7 hrs)**

As the yacht leaves Ventisquero Pio XI south /south-west it will enter Canal Wide and will then head west along Canal Trinidad on the northern side of the Madre de Dios Island (Mother of God). Isla Madre de Dios, is a largely unexplored, 110,000 hectare / 270,000 acre area of rock, wind and sea that - unlike most of the other countless islands in the mind-bogglingly intricate Patagonian archipelago - belongs to neither a national park nor reserve.

In the early 2000's the island received a measure of protection from the government's Ministry of National Patrimony which included it among the estimated 365,000 hectare / 900,000 acres of

land the government body now controls throughout the country. The island has benefited from a series of joint French-Chilean expeditions led by a group called Centre Terre, which is helping shed light on the island's rich biological, geographical and cultural assets. The modern day explorers have visited and explored several of Madre de Dios' unique deep caves and crevices. One of those caves, "el Sumidero del Futuro" (the Sink of the Future), is thought to go down at least 376 meters / 1,230 feet, making it the deepest in Chile. Visitors can also visit the 305 meter / 1,000 feet high "Sima del Descanso" (Chasm of Rest).



*Isla Madre de Dios*

Beneath the surface of Madre de Dios lies a large and complex cave system that is carved out from years of erosion. The caves once served as shelters for indigenous tribes known as the Alacalufes or Kawésqar. Evidence of Alacalufe presence in the zone dates back to 6,000 B.C. In the 17th century, when the nomadic indigenous group first made contact with Europeans, their population is estimated to have been between 2,500 - 3,000. Today these tribes are extinct but very old wall drawings remain, along with burial grounds and fire pits. In the largest cave, known as 'The Cave of the Whales', many ancient whale skeletons have been found, including 5 blue whale skulls.

**ACTIVITIES/SIGHTS:** Kayaking, stand-up paddle, fishing, trekking, climbing, cave exploring, archeology, photography, helicopter sight-seeing.

#### **DAY 5: MOTHER OF GOD ISLAND TO GLACIAR AMALIA (65 NM / 7 hrs)**

Navigate south on Canal Concepcion and east into Canal Andres, which will then turn into the 40 kilometer / 25 mile long Canal Pitt as it turns towards the south east. Once at the end of Canal Pitt,

Estero Peel will lead towards Estero Amalia, the southernmost of four arms of Estero Peel, all of which cut deep into the cordillera, penetrating deep up to the heart of the Patagonian Icecap. The Estero Peel leads into one of the wildest and less explored corners of Patagonia – the scenery is majestic with high peaks emerging from blue glaciers and dark red slopes alive with countless waterfalls. North of Estero Amalia, along a 48 kilometer / 30 mile long tender or helicopter ride many other smaller glaciers are worthwhile seeing if weather conditions are good: Ventisquero Asia, Ventisquero Calvo, Ventisquero de Los Lobos, Ventisquero de Los Patos and Ventisquero Garcia. These northern glaciers along Estero Peel are better to be visited from the air or by tender vessel as there are no appropriate anchorages on the northern side of Estero Peel and parts of it have not been officially surveyed.

Ventisquero Amalia is particularly spectacular and has a unique feature: emerging in the middle of the tongue of ice there is a huge dark stairway, consisting of gravel and stones ground by the glacier in its slow slide down the valley.



*Ventisquero Amalia*

**ACTIVITIES/SIGHTS:** Kayaking, stand-up paddle, trekking, photography, helicopter sight-seeing.

#### **DAY 6: VENTISQUERO AMALIA TO CALETA BERNARD (75 NM / 8 hrs)**

Leave the Estero Amalia and Estero Peel towards the west and head south along the Canal Sarmiento and navigate on the eastern sides of Isla Esperanza and Isla Vancouver to reach Caleta Bernard on the western side of Isla Carrington.

Canal Sarmiento is clear of dangers and well-marked with light beacons all along the way, making night navigation also possible along this 112 km long / 70 mile long channel. The Channel is named

after the Spanish navigator Captain don Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, who left the port of Callao in Peru in 1579 and explored these channels.



*Caleta Bernard*

**ACTIVITIES/SIGHTS:** Kayaking, stand-up paddle, fishing, trekking, climbing, photography, helicopter sight-seeing.

#### **DAY 7: CALETA BERNARD TO PUERTO NATALES (85 nm / 9 hrs)**

Navigate southeast on the Canal Sarmiento which turns into Estrecho Collingswood and then becomes Canal Union as it turns east and then north towards Puerto Natales. As it turns north it divides into Canal Santa Maria and Canal Kirke, both of which will lead towards the Golfo Almirante Montt on which the city of Puerto Natales is located.

**ACTIVITIES/SIGHTS:** Trekking, climbing, photography, city-sightseeing, helicopter sight-seeing.

#### **ABOUT PUERTO NATALES**

Puerto Natales was originally inhabited by the Kawésqar or Alacalufe people and the Aoniken or Tehuelche people. The first European to discover the area where the city is located was Juan Ladrillero, a Spanish explorer who was looking for the Strait of Magellan's western passage in 1557. The city was later settled by European immigrants, primarily Germans, British, including English, Welsh and Scots, Croats, Greeks, Italians and Spaniards. It was then settled by Chilean people, with a substantial number coming from the island of Chiloe, all attracted by the sheep breeding industry.

The city was formally founded in 1911, nowadays, one of its most important industries is tourism although the cattle and aquaculture industries are also significant. A rancher feel and an ever growing adventure activity scene are mixed in this city, which is best known as the gateway to the famous Parque Nacional Torres del Paine.

While in Puerto Natales visitors can climb the Dorotea Hill to look at Puerto Natales from above. If they are lucky, they be able to see the majestic flight of the condor that nests on the vertical walls of the hill.



*Puerto Natales*

Also, visitors can discover the Milodon Cave and get to know the history of this giant sloth that used to live here in this southernmost part of Chile more than 10,000 years ago. A short cruise through the Ultima Esperanza fjord will give visitors a taste for some stunning views of glaciers and numerous streams that tumble over the cliffs into the sound in fine cascades.

Visitors will be pleasantly surprised with the countless activities to do outdoors and they will be amazed by the vibrant colors that paint the sky at sunset, which can also be seen from a kayak or bike.

But not everything is physical effort, so visitors should enjoy the abundant Patagonian food – Patagonian lamb being a specialty in this area - and take the opportunity to rest overnight on land at the multiple accommodations available here, one of them being the Hotel Serrano.

An interesting fact is that the shops in Puerto Natales do not handout plastic bags, so shoppers must have room in their backpack or carry eco-friendly bags.

#### **DAY 8 and 9: PUERTO NATALES TO GLACIAR SERRANO / PUERTO BELLAVISTA (35 NM / 4 hrs)**

Navigate north along the Canal Señoret which then turns into Estero Ultima Esperanza to arrive at the end of to the sound of the same name. Seno Ultima Esperanza is set in a beautiful landscape of broad lakes towering mountains and vast glaciers. One of these is the Ventisquero Balmaceda, at the foot of the mountain of the same name (2,237 meters / 7,339 feet). Part of this area lies within

the boundaries of the Parque Nacional Bernardo O'Higgins and the rest is in the Parque Nacional Torres del Paine. The concentration of so many glaciers in such a small area is just breathtaking: Glaciar Grey, Glaciar Zapata, Ventisquero Tyndall (also called Geikie), Glaciar Pingo and Glaciar Serrano, all of them facing a glacial lake. The area is a natural marvel, but can be touristy due to its proximity to Puerto Natales.

The yacht can be anchored at Puerto Bellavista at the western end of the sound, from where Lago Azul and Puerto Toro can be visited using a smaller boat or tender.

The Torres del Paine National Park can be visited from this point via Helicopter.

It is a national park encompassing mountains, glaciers, lakes, and rivers in southern Chilean Patagonia, with its Cordillera del Paine being the centerpiece of the park. It lies in a transition area between the Magellanic subpolar forests and the Patagonian steppes.

It measures approximately 242,242 hectares / 599,000 acres. It is one of the largest and most visited parks in Chile. The Torres del Paine are the distinctive three granite peaks of the Paine mountain range or Paine Massif. They extend up to 2,500 meters / 8,200 feet above sea level, and are joined by the Cuernos del Paine. The area also boasts valleys, rivers such as the Paine, lakes, and glaciers. The well-known lakes include Lago Grey, Lago Pehoé, Lago Nordenskiöld, and Lago Sarmiento.



*Lago Grey*

Torres del Paine National Park is adorned with beautiful vegetation, including an evergreen which produces vivid red flowers grouped in corymbs, and Darwin's slipper flower, of striking shape and colors. The park contains four vegetation zones: Patagonian steppe, Pre-Andean shrub land, Magellanic subpolar forests and Andean Desert. The vegetation of the Patagonian steppe is dominated by species which are resistant to harsh winds and weather conditions that are typical of the Patagonian region. The Magellanic deciduous forest is home to various species of trees.



*Glaciar Serrano*

Guanacos are one of the most common mammals found in the park. Other mammals include foxes and pumas. It is also home to the endangered Chilean Huemul.

The park contains breeding populations of 15 bird of prey species and two others are likely reproducing here. Among them are Andean condor, black-chested buzzard-eagle, rufous-tailed hawk, cinereous harrier, chimango caracara, Magellanic horned owl, austral pygmy-owl, to name but a few. Other birds occurring in the park include the Chilean flamingo, Darwin's rhea, coscoroba swan, black-necked swan, Magellanic woodpecker, Magellan goose, and black-faced ibis.

We recommend for the yacht to stay at this location for two days as the park offers many activities: tours of the park, climbing, photography, flora and fauna, fly-fishing, boating, horseback rides, kayaking, ice-walking, mountain-biking, trekking, mountaineering, and much more.



*Torres del Paine National Park*

**ACTIVITIES/SIGHTS:** Trekking, climbing, horse-back riding, flora & fauna, fishing, photography, helicopter sight-seeing.

**DAY 10: GLACIAR SERRANO TO PUERTO NATALES (35 NM / 4 hrs)**

Return to Puerto Natales and disembark to transfer to Puerto Natales Airport, Aerodromo Teniente Julio Gallardo (PNT), a commercial airport located 7 kilometers / 4 miles north-northwest of the city. In October 2016 works to extend and widen both the taxiway and runway will have been completed and commercial flights from/to Santiago will commence in December 2016. The taxiway was widened to 23 meters / 75 feet and the runway extended to 2,000 m / 6,600 feet and widened to 45 m / 148 feet, therefore being able to handle aircraft such as the A320's and Boeing 737's.

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### 10 DAY CENTRAL PATAGONIA CRUISE ROUTE

