



Patagonia

Punta Arenas, Puerto Natales & Torres del Paine National Park

Patagonia is the southernmost end of the American continent. Local flights land in Punta Arenas. Today, the city's role is as a service provider for the petroleum and fishing industries.

On the outskirts is Pali-Aike National Park, a unique volcanic landscape with lava flows, extinct craters and various caves.

There are also two penguin colonies which can be visited on day trips from Punta Arenas. We have based our programme around Torres del Paine National Park, which fully deserves its worldwide acclaim. No other park in South America can boast the amazing combination of breathtaking scenery, wildlife and interesting walking trails and hiking. As a result, during the peak summer months, it can get a little crowded. However, to put it into perspective, it receives fewer visitors in a year than Yellowstone does in a single day! The winds in the park can

exceed 120km/hour during the summer months. Wildlife in the park includes some 25 species of mammals, most notably pumas, guanacos and foxes. There are over 115 species of resident and migratory bird species including flamingos, coots, geese, raptors and the nandu (South American ostrich). Several glaciers cascade off the ice field and into the various lakes. Also worth a visit are the immense caves of Cueva del Milodon some 30m high, 70m wide and 200m deep.

There is choice between staying in Puerto Natales and travelling into the park or alternatively staying in the more expensive lodges actually inside the park.



Isla Rey Jorge

Punta Arenas

The Isla Rey Jorge hotel is located in a convenient position in a side street off the main square. An elegant and old building dating from the beginning of the century which has been converted into a comfortable hotel.

This four star establishment has 21 standard rooms and 4 junior suites all equipped with private bathroom, telephone and cable TV. The junior suites also provide jacuzzi and king size beds. Other services available are bar, restaurant, internet access, laundry and room service. Good value for money.

Useful Notes

Travelling to Torres del Paine

Fly to Punta Arenas (from Santiago or Puerto Montt) and then a 3-hour public bus journey to Puerto Natales (pre-booked) - the gateway for Torres del Paine National Park. It is a further 3-hour transfer time to reach the park. Public bus transfers from Punta Arenas to Puerto Natales run every day. Transfers and excursions to Torres del Paine only operate from September 15 - April 15. Transfers outside of these months are limited and depend on climatic conditions.

Combinations

Why not combine Torres del Paine with Calafate, Argentina? See page 174 for details.

Austral Cruises

The M/V Mare and M/V Australis offer 4 night cruises from Punta Arenas to Ushuaia and vice versa. The cruises navigate areas such as the Strait of Magellan and the Beagle Channel to view the fjords, bays, glaciers and islands of the region. Daily excursions are included to enjoy the local flora and fauna including colonies of Magellan penguins and elephant seals. For full details please see page 158.

WEB EXTRA

For information on more hotels in Punta Arenas and Puerto Natales please refer to our website

www.sunvil.co.uk

Indigo Hotel & Spa

Puerto Natales

This hotel designed by Sebastian Irarrazaval allows you to appreciate the vastness of the surrounding Patagonian landscape in a comfortable and relaxed environment. Located on the waterfront and close to the centre of Puerto Natales, it is a perfect base from which to explore Torres del Paine.

The hotel has 29 rooms, including 6 suites, each with private bathrooms. One of the suites has a Jacuzzi in the room which over looks the fjords.

The restaurant serves locally caught seafood and offers a wide range of Chilean wines. Adjacent to the hotel is a snack bar where you can enjoy light meals or a Pisco Sour, a speciality of the bar, well deserved after a long day trekking!

Enjoy magnificent views over the fjords from the roof-top spa comprising of 3 open-air rooftop Jacuzzis, sauna and treatment rooms. Excursions to the national park and other areas can be arranged locally. This hotel is highly recommended for honeymooners.