

*Lakes of Southern Patagonia*  
*Self-drive Road Trip*  
*Argentino, Viedma and San Martin Lakes*



This is a suggested itinerary for a self-drive tour, providing the freedom your clients will be looking for.

The specifics of the trip will include the vehicle rental and hotels, that will be pre-arranged. We will provide detailed information about the journey, including directions, distances and safety tips, along with recommendations for restaurants and must-see sights so travelers can make the most of the trip.

Our suggested self-drive trips are organized through our trustworthy companies, so you can always rely on our expertise to help you plan the perfect holiday for your clients.

**Benefits of a self-guided tour:**

- **Freedom:** A self-drive tour offers complete freedom and flexibility to decide where to travel and at what pace.
- **The Ideal Itinerary:** your clients will receive all the necessary information and tools, such as directions, maps, and safety advice to make their trip enjoyable and easy.
- **Local Knowledge:** While the idea is to have freedom to go wherever they want, our knowledgeable consultants will still provide plenty of helpful tips and recommendations for must-see sights, pre-arranging excursions, and activities based on their specific itinerary and interests.

## Southern Patagonia Self Drive Sample Itinerary

This is an itinerary to a Patagonia most often described as wind-swept, sparsely populated, remote, and rugged. It is rich in wildlife and human history, sprinkled with sheep estancias and punctuated by national parks, towering snow-capped mountains, glistening glaciers and deep blue fjords and bays. Wide sweeping vistas of steppes can be broken by towering snow-capped mountains or can go as far as the naked eye can see.

**Calafate** takes its name from an abundant thorny shrub found in the southernmost area of Argentine Patagonia. Initially, the **Tehuelche Indians** inhabited this area taking refuge in the leafy forests and subsisted through the cold winters by using this bush as firewood. According to an old Tehuelche proverb, *'He who tastes calafate, shall return.'* Founded in 1927 as a frontier town on the southern shore of **Lake Argentino**, the village developed as a sheltering-place for wool-traders, and when in 1938 the surrounding Southern Continental Ice fields were declared a National Park, it grew slowly to become a popular tourist destination.



With daily 3-hour flights from Buenos Aires, Calafate Airport is also connected to other Patagonian airports like Ushuaia, Trelew and Bariloche. By land, it is a 6-hour drive to Puerto Natales and Torres del Paine National Park, in Chile.

*Calafate* is the base from which to see the spectacular **Perito Moreno Glacier** and the **Glaciers National Park**. The town hugs the shore of turquoise **Lago Argentino**, and this location, combined with its leafy streets, gives it the feel of an oasis in the desert steppe.

### Exploring the Glaciers National Park

The layout of this wild and difficult terrain makes it one of the most unusual National Parks in the world, declared of World Heritage status by UNESCO. Part of the **Patagonian Continental Ice field**, 47 major glaciers formed by the compacting of snow and ice, slowly slide down from the peaks of the Andes into two lakes, the 15,000 year-old **Lake Argentino** and **Lake Viedma** near the **Fitz Roy** Mountain Range (11,138 ft).

Drive a leg on the mythical Route 40 towards one of the newest towns in Argentina: *El Chaltén*. It lies on the banks of Río de las Vueltas, within the northern end of Los Glaciares National Park and close to Lake Viedma. Often referred to as the National Trekking Capital, this is the land of the unmistakable majestic silhouettes of Mount Fitz Roy (3,405mts / 11,168ft above sea level) and the Cerro Torre (3,128mts / 10,260ft above sea level), two of the most difficult mountains to climb in the world.

**Chaltén** is a Tehuelche word meaning smoking mountain or volcano because the indigenous Tehuelche believed -erroneously- that Mount Fitz Roy was a volcano, as its peak is most of the time wreathed in clouds.

From **Chalten**, drive back towards Route 40, and then turn north towards Tres Lagos, to reach **Estancia La Maipú**, on the shores of *Lake San Martín*. Estancia La Maipú is 280 km from El Calafate and 227 km from Chalten, and the last 100 kms are gravel.

This is a little-explored area of our country: *Lake San Martín*, the Maipú and Chacabuco peninsulas and, in the distance, the border with Chile. The Perito Moreno, discovered and named San Martín lake in 1877. These were -and still are- uninhabited lands. It feels remote. Civilization is the ranch's main house. The rest, a turquoise lake, steppe, and wind.

**Suggested accommodations**

- **Lake Argentino (El Calafate):** Estancia Nibepo Aike, Eolo Lodge
- **Lake Viedma:** Estancia Helsingfors (Southern coast of the lake)  
or
- **Closer to Chalten:** Chalten Camp
- **Lake San Martín:** Estancia La Maipú



**Suggested Itinerary**

**Day 1: El Calafate / Estancia Nibepo Aike**

Arrival in El Calafate airport pick up your car rental and take Provincial Route 11 towards El Calafate town. In the first roundabout take the second exit and continue driving through the main road until you reach Av. Del Libertador. Continue driving with the instructions below from El Calafate city.





**Nibepo Aike** is a typical Patagonian ranch nestled in Los Glaciares National Park with mountain scenery of incomparable beauty. The Estancia covers 10.000 hectares and dates back to the early twentieth century. The house is rustic and authentic, a perfect example of the strong tenacity of the early pioneers to this remote frontier, who established themselves at the turn of the century in this solitary, windswept albeit magic land.

Wildlife-lovers will find the natural scenery fascinating, with various species of local fauna to spot: condors, eagles, flamingos, *kaikén*, black-necked swans; and deciduous forests of the native southern-beech varieties - *lenga* and *ñire*; *notros*, *calafate*, *topa-topa* and other flora.

Meals at the estancia are prepared with home-grown meat & vegetable produce and dishes include regional specialties as well as international cuisine.



### Day 2 & 3: El Calafate: Estancia Nibepo Aike

*Days at leisure to enjoy activities in Nibepo Aike.*

Its main activity is cattle ranching, which is complemented by sheep raising. Besides touring the area, guests can enjoy a wide range of activities while based at the lodge. These include participating in ranch activities such as sheep-shearing, rodeos, sheep and cattle-branding, milking; contemplating nature; horse-riding for learning or experienced riders; and fishing (the estancia is ideally located on the banks of Lago Rico and has fishing tackle available for guests to use).



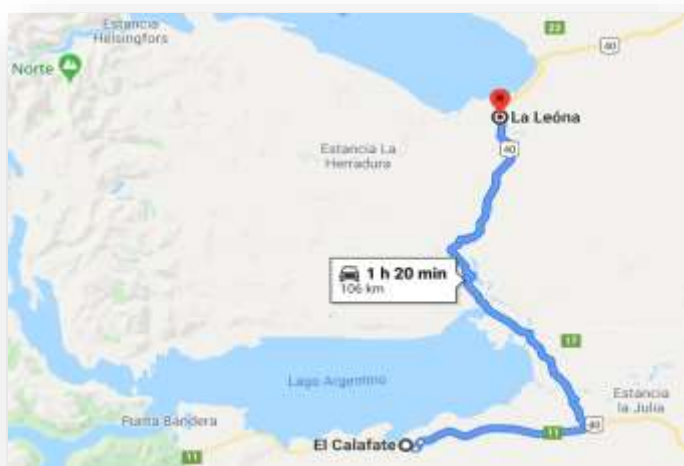
**Special suggestion:** Visit to the Perito Moreno Glacier.

The Perito Moreno Glacier is one of the world's largest reserves of fresh water, measuring 96.52 square miles - 250 square kilometers. It is one of the few glaciers that is advancing instead of retreating. It is thirty kms long. This imposing wall of ice towers some 70 metres above the walkways that offer different views from the promontory of Península de Magallanes that juts out into the Argentino Lake. As you stand below gazing up at the massive rugged face, you become aware that the glacier is very much a living, evolving thing, that creaks and cracks with rifle like shots which preface the calving of huge chunks of ice the size of houses, which break off and fall in slow motion through the air into the black waters. They hit the surface with an almighty crash, submerging and bobbing up again as icebergs floating into the centre of the lake. The largest and most spectacular calvings occur when the glacier has grown to form a bridge across to the promontory, thereby cutting off the water flow between Brazo Rico and the Canal de los Témpanos. The natural dam that forms supports increasing pressure, which builds up as water and ice accumulate on the Brazo Rico side. Water eventually seeps through the ice at the point at which the ice touches the land, slowly creating a tunnel. The tunnel becomes wider and wider until the pressure of the glacier moving forward fractures the bridge most dramatically. This dam/rupture cycle is not regular. Although local legend has it that this takes place every four years, it naturally recurs at any frequency between once a year to less than once a decade.



Meals: Full board.

#### Day 4: El Calafate / Lake Viedma

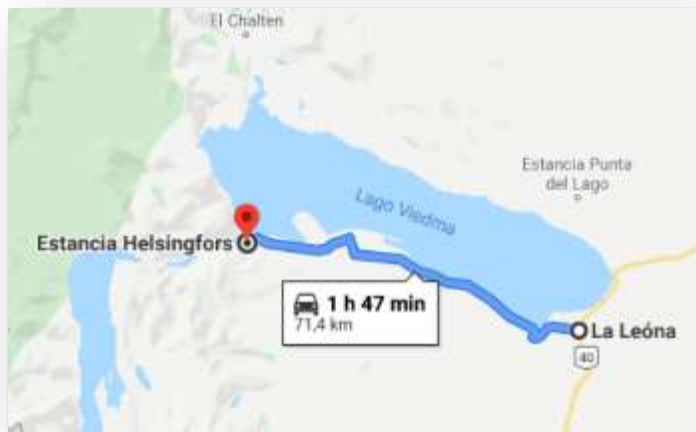


Drive back to El Calafate town and take National Route 40 that leads north towards El Chaltén. After 106 km you will find the historical La Leona site, where you will be able to have some coffee or try a piece of cake.

Built in 1894 by Danish immigrants, on this precise spot 17 years before the Perito Francisco Moreno (scientist and explorer who discovered the Glacier) was attacked and badly wounded by a female puma. And

in 1905 Butch Cassidy, the Sundance Kid and his wife Ethel Place stayed there for a month in their flight from authorities towards Chile, after robbing the London Bank in Rio Gallegos.





After la Leona, continue along National Route 40 for another 350 metres and then turn left on Provincial Route 21. Drive west for approximately 72 km, bordering Viedma lake, to arrive at estancia Helsingfors, which is on the lake.

During the early XX century, a Finnish adventurer, Alfred Ranström, settled at the foot of the Andes Mountains, on the SW shores of Viedma Lake. In memory of his fatherland, he named his estancia after his country's capital city: Helsingfors (Helsinki in Swedish). Here he lived with his wife, Marie Lisau and their children, lightening up this wonderful spot. His son Knud, an avid tree-lover planted many of the conifers which make up the surrounding forests including pines, firs and sequoias. In the 60's upon Knud's death, a traditional family from the province of Santa Cruz bought this beautiful property, and since 1995 they have been welcoming guests from all over the world.



### Day 5 & 6: Lake Viedma: Helsingfors

*Days at leisure to enjoy activities at Helsingfors.*

The lodge is surrounded by a majestic natural landscape, protected by lush woods which give way to a panoramic view of the lake, Mount Fitz Roy and the Andes Mountains. It offers 8 cosy guestrooms with private bathrooms (some with whirlpool baths and others with Scottish showers). A large fireplace in the living area is a great spot to meet other guests and enjoy a drink at the bar. A refined cellar with Argentine and Chilean wines accompanies the delights of a sophisticated regional cuisine. Activities are exclusive for Helsingfors guests and are conducted with bilingual guides.

- Trekking or Horse-back riding on the beach with views to the Fitz Roy
- Trekking to Peninsula del Viento
- Trekking or Horse-back ride to the Blue Lagoon
- Trekking or Horse-back ride to Los Hermanos Estancia
- Trekking to the Condor Lookout
- Trekking to Del Morro Lagoon

Meals: Full board.

## Day 7: Lake Viedma / Lake San Martin: Estancia La Maipú



Take Route 21 to the East and then Route 40 to the North for 54 km approximately. Turn left on Provincial Route 31 and drive for around 66 km. continue along Provincial Route 33 for another 40 km and you will get to Estancia La Maipú.

**La Maipu** is an iconic 82.000-acre estancia in the San Martin Lake area. Its main house has four private cozy rooms: two triples and four doubles, all with private bathroom and heating. Three hours of electricity and only two hours of satellite wi-fi per day will help guests relax and unwind.



Rates include lodging facilities, all meals and full day activities.

## Day 8 & 9: Lake San Martin: Estancia La Maipú

*Days at leisure to enjoy at La Maipú.*

This is a paradise for those who love to get lost and explore untouched wilderness.

La Maipú offers 8 hiking trails of different levels of difficulty. One of the main hikes is to “La Condorera”. It takes approximately 8 hs (round trip) to reach the peak of this beautiful mountain where Andean Condors nest. The highest point of about 1400 meters is an effort to reach, but certainly worth it. From there it is possible to see condors (if they want to show themselves), a spectacular view of Lake San Martin and part of Chile.



To reach the highest point it is necessary to cross a forest of lehengas and several small courses of water. Other interesting hikes from La Maipu are to Maipú Peninsula, and to the Astillado Mountain.

Meals: Full board

**Day 10: Lake San Martin/ El Calafate**

Drive back to El Calafate, drop off the rental vehicle at the airport.

*Driving distance: 266 km approx. which may take up to 4 hours. Half this distance is gravel road.*

*End of services*