

# CHILE & PATAGONIA

FROM DESERTS TO GLACIERS

Torres del Paine National Park

## OVERVIEW

Venture into one of the planet's greatest frontiers as we journey through some of the most spectacular landscapes in the world.

Across 21-days, we will explore the arid plains, colourful canyons and high-altitude salt lakes of the Atacama Desert to the lush rainforests, icy fjords, glaciers and rugged mountain peaks of Torres del Paine National Park.

This comprehensive tour celebrates the iconic natural beauty of Chile and Patagonia, while also exploring its rich historic past. Tour leader Dr Chris Carter will share his exceptional knowledge of the ancient civilisations who lived in this region as we discover the pathways of the Inca Empire, marvel at the LLuta Valley geoglyphs and view the ancient Chinchorro mummies.

Our adventure also includes an extraordinary maritime voyage through Patagonia's northern icy fjords and quaint local villages, with six-days aboard the elegant MV Skorpions II, an A1 Ice-Class rated small expedition ship.

**An optional post-tour extension to the southernmost tip of South America, cruising through the fjords and channels of Tierra del Fuego, is also available.**



## TOUR LEADER

**Dr Chris Carter** is an archaeologist with over 20 years' experience leading tours. He has a BA (Hons), MA and PhD from the Australian National University with his PhD research having been carried out in the Atacama desert region.

## TOUR DATES

**January 15 - February 4, 2025**  
21 Days

## TOUR PRICE

**\$22,850** per person, twin share  
**\$6,690** single supplement  
*\*Based on Parthenon Cabins*

## TOUR DEPOSITS

A **\$1,000** non-refundable deposit is required per person to confirm your booking on tour. An instalment of \$5,000 will be required in July 2024 on confirmation of the charter.

## GROUP SIZE

Maximum number of **16** in group

## INCLUSIONS

**Land component:** 15 nights in centrally located 3- to 5-star hotels. All breakfasts, 9 lunches and 6 dinners. Internal economy flights as indicated, airport-hotel transfers, all ground transport, entrance fees and tipping.

**Cruise component:** 5 nights aboard the MV Skorpions II, with all meals and drinks onboard, all shore excursions, and the group tip for cruise staff.



# MV SKORPIOS II

**CABINS** 53    **GUESTS** 106    **CREW** 34    **LENGTH** 70 METRES    **BEAM** 10 METRES    **REFURB** 2012



## NORTHERN PATAGONIA FJORDS CRUISE

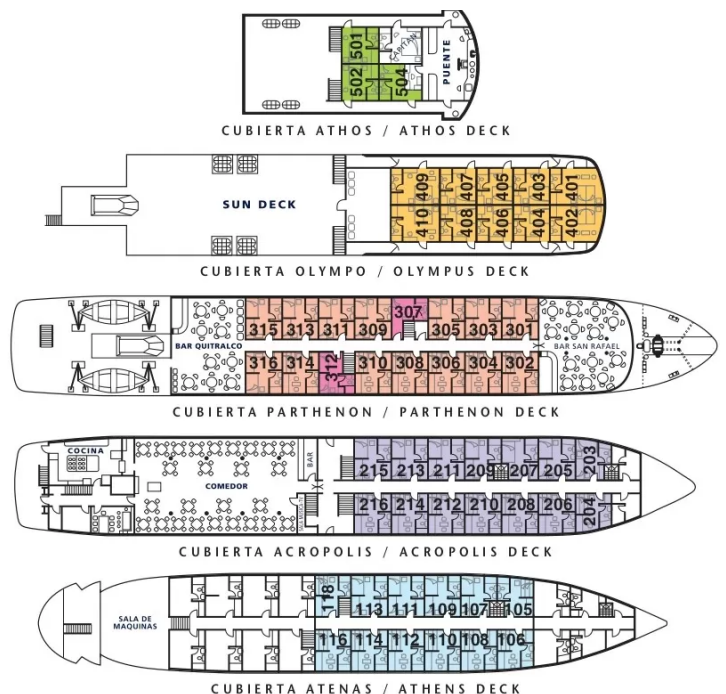
At the centre of this tour is a six-day cruise aboard the MV Skorpios II, where we journey to the most remote and spectacular corners of the Northern Chilean fjords, witnessing some of the world's largest glaciers outside of the polar regions.

Sailing in and out of Puerto Montt, Chile, our 800-mile voyage takes in Chiloé Island, the remote fishing villages of Puerto Aguirre and Dalcahue, the hot-spring thermal baths of Quitrалco and the age-old ice formations of the San Rafael Glacier.

An A1 Ice-Class rated expedition ship, the MV Skorpios II offers ample wildlife viewing opportunities and numerous shore-based excursions. The ship has 55 cabins, each with a private bathroom, TV, wardrobe and bedside tables, numerous outdoor viewing platforms, a sun deck and two indoor lounges.

All onboard dining is included, freshly prepared by the restaurant team, along with an open bar serving drinks and snacks for the duration of the cruise.

Academy Travel is holding Twin Cabins on the Parthenon (3rd) deck. Cabins are upgradable subject to availability.







## DETAILED ITINERARY

**Route:** Santiago (2 nights), San Pedro (3 nights), Iquique (1 night), Arica (3 nights), Puerto Varas (1 night), MV Skorpions II (5 nights), Puerto Natales (1 night), Torres del Paine (3 nights), Santiago (1 night) or Punta Arenas (1 night - Extension Tour only)

### Start & Finish

The tour starts at 3.00pm on Wednesday 15 January, at Hotel Plaza San Francisco, Santiago.  
The tour ends after breakfast on Tuesday 4 February, at the Holiday Inn Santiago Airport Terminal, Santiago.  
For those continuing on the post-tour extension, the tour will conclude on Monday 10 February, at the Holiday Inn Santiago Airport Terminal, Santiago.

## TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

### High Country Scenery

Experience the spectacular Andes mountain range, which shows its beauty in the Patagonian provinces, and tour the dramatic 600,000-acre Torres del Paine National Park – rising vertically more than 6,500 feet.

### The Atacama Desert

Venture into the world's driest nonpolar desert in northern Chile with archaeologist Dr Chris Carter, whose PhD research was based on excavations he carried out at coastal sites in the Atacama Desert.

### Ancient Civilisations & Prehistoric Settlements

View the Chinchorro mummies, the oldest artificially preserved specimens in the world; discover the pathways of the Inka Empire and marvel at the pre-Columbian Lluta Valley geoglyphs.

### Expedition Cruise

Voyage to the most remote corners of the Northern Chilean fjords, stopping at tiny villages and hot springs en-route. Visit Chiloé Island, spot wildlife and explore the stunning San Rafael Glacier in solitude.

### Life on the Edge of the World

Explore one of the wildest places on Earth, discover the extraordinary people that inhabit it and experience the thrill of spotting rare wildlife such as blue whales, condors, seals and penguins.

Included meals are indicated with B, L, D, and PL for Picnic Lunch

### Wednesday 15 January

#### Arrive Santiago

Airport transfers to our hotel in Santiago will be arranged by Academy Travel. We meet in the foyer of our hotel at 3.00pm before heading out for a leisurely walk through the streets of downtown Santiago. This evening our tour leader will present an introductory talk about Chile before we enjoy dinner together. Overnight Santiago (D)

### Thursday 16 January

#### Panoramic views and traditional Chilean wines

We begin the day with an excursion to the top of Cerro San Cristóbal, the mountain peak that provides a dramatic backdrop to the city of Santiago, where we take in spectacular views across the city and the snow-capped Andes. Following this, we visit one of the oldest wineries in the region, where we learn about the history of the vineyard, production processes and wines before enjoying lunch in their traditional hacienda. This afternoon we stroll through the Cerro Santa Lucía, a pleasant park with views over Santiago's unique architecture. Overnight Santiago (B, L)

### Friday 17 January

#### San Pedro and the Valley of the Moon

Departing Santiago this morning, we fly to Calama, the site of one of the largest copper mines in the world and our gateway to San Pedro de Atacama – the cradle of Atacameño culture and the archaeological capital of Chile. After time to check in we enjoy free time for lunch before learning more about the prehistory of the region at the local museum. Later this afternoon we watch as the desert changes colour across the iconic and other-worldly landscapes of the Valley of the Moon before dining in our hotel. Overnight San Pedro (B, D)



**Salar de Atacama**



**Atacama Desert**

### **Saturday 18 January** **High Country Scenery**

Today we explore the picturesque canyons surrounding San Pedro, marvelling at the time-eroded rock formations. We visit the stone fortress of Pukara de Quito in the pre-Inka Archaeological Park before crossing the valley to the Inka site of Catarpé. During the afternoon we will see the remains of a prehistoric settlement, known as Tulo, built on the floodplain of the Rio San Pedro. We will also visit the Valle de la Muerte (Valley of Death) to see more of these unique landscape features. Overnight San Pedro (B)

### **Sunday 19 January** **Salar de Atacama**

Our highlight today is a full day visiting the extraordinary landscape around Chile's largest salt lake, the Salar de Atacama, which is surrounded by volcanoes and a refuge to the colourful Andean flamingos. Our journey continues through the spectacular landscape, past archaeological sites and on to the high-altitude lagoons, Miscante and Miniques, which are supposedly connected by an underground river, and are home to a rich collection of local fauna. Overnight San Pedro (B, PL)

### **Monday 20 January** **Between the mountains and the sea**

Leaving San Pedro, we continue our drive through the heart of the Atacama Desert en route to Iquique in the north. This long and narrow coastal desert, located between the Pacific Ocean and Andes Mountains, is home to desiccated salt flats, inhospitable wildlands and the vast lifeless landscapes that NASA uses to test instruments for interplanetary travel. Our exploration takes in breathtaking vistas, unique rock formations and the mineral laden landscapes of the driest place on earth. Leaving the Atacama and descending to the coast, we stop for a simple seafood lunch in the busy port of Tocopilla, before journeying north along the coast to Iquique, our stop for the night. Overnight Iquique (B, L)

### **Tuesday 21 January** **The hidden beach - Caleta Vitor**

Departing Iquique this morning, we travel north along the Panamerican Highway, traversing several quebradas (canyons over a kilometre deep), as we proceed. This is 'big' country and provides a glimpse of what the weathered Australian landscape may have once looked like. We will stop along the coast at Caleta Vitor, a beautiful beach hidden behind 1000m high cliffs. One of the earliest known settlements on the north coast of Chile, Caleta Vitor was continuously occupied for at least 9,000 years. Here we see evidence of both the Tiwinaaku and Inka cultural groups and admire the dramatic scenery. With luck we might see some of the local fauna, including marine otters and Humboldt Penguins while enjoying our picnic lunch. This afternoon we continue to the Chilean port city of Arica, on the border with





San Miguel de Azapa



Petrohue

Peru, built on the sandy dunes of the driest desert in the world and traditional home of the Chinchorro people. In the small Museo Sitio Colón 10 we come face to face with the 7600-year-old Chinchorro mummies (more than two millennia older than the Egyptian mummies). Discovered when an architect bought this former private home with the intention of converting it into a hotel, we see the 32 excavated mummies in situ. Later our tour leader will give a talk about the UNESCO World Heritage Listed mummies and the intriguing people who made them before we enjoy dinner together nearby. Overnight Arica (B, PL, D)

### **Wednesday 22 January** **Lluta Valley**

Today we explore the Lluta Valley, where the Rio Lluta has formed a lush oasis in the middle of the desert. Here we admire the many 14th-century geoglyphs and petroglyphs, representing llamas and men travelling through the arid mountains, and we visit the remains of an Inka village positioned on the riverside terrace. Following lunch in a rural restaurant, we then head south and visit the Museo Universidad de Tarapacá - San Miguel de Azapa, famous for its superb archaeological collection and cultural heritage displays, including the Chinchorro Mummies. The evening is at leisure following our return to Arica. Overnight Arica (B, L)

### **Thursday 23 January** **Into the Andes**

Following an early breakfast, we head to the foothills of the Andes, passing through spectacular high-country scenery, arid desert, and deeply incised valleys on our way to the highland village of Putre, which is backed by snow-capped volcanoes. En route we visit the waystation, Inka tambo, see parts of the ancient Inka trail, and stop at the 12th century pre-Inkan Fort, Pukara de Copaquilla. Arriving in Putre, we have time to adjust to the high altitude as we explore this colonial town and observe traditional houses adorned with stone carved portals and ornate window frames dating to the 17th century. This afternoon we return to our hotel in Arica. Overnight Arica (B, L)

### **Friday 24 January** **Southward bound - Puerto Varas**

We depart the arid landscapes of the north this morning and fly, via Santiago, to Chile's lush southern Lake District. Arriving in Puerto Varas on the expansive Lago Llanquihue this afternoon, we appreciate the town's distinctive German-inspired architecture - legacy to its colonial past. Time permitting, we'll take a scenic drive to appreciate the pristine environment and dramatic waterfalls of Saltos del Petrohue and the vivid emerald-coloured waters of Lago Todos los Santos, formed by glacial and volcanic activity. Overnight Puerto Varas (B)





San Rafael Glacier



Dalcahue

## Saturday 25 January

### Expedition by sea - Chiloé Island

Our sea-based expedition begins today in nearby Puerto Montt, where we board our Ice-category adventure cruise ship, the MS Skorpios II. Departing at midday, we leave the mainland and cruise across the Gulf of Ancud to the island of Chiloé. Here we disembark via the tenders and make our way to the picturesque coastal village of Quemchi, where we can visit a handicraft market, cafes and museum, or just stroll around the beautiful streets. Overnight MS Skorpios II (B, D)

## Sunday 26 January

### Puerto Aguirre and Isla Barrientos

Our cruise continues through the Straits of Moraleda and Ferronave today. In the late morning we arrive at Puerto Aguirre, a fishing village encircled by the Chonos Archipelago. We disembark and walk through the village before entering a distinctive Patagonian temperate rainforest on our way to a panoramic lookout. Early in the afternoon we return to the ship and cruise to Isla Barrientos, where we board smaller boats to allow us to approach the rocky formations, home to the largest bird colonies in Chile, featuring kelp gulls, rock shags, red-legged shags and imperial shags. The islands are also home to inquisitive South American fur seals, who often come up to the boats to say hello. Overnight MS Skorpios II (B, L, D)

## Monday 27 January

### San Rafael Glacier

Early this morning we cruise toward the entrance of San Rafael Lagoon and anchor near the San Rafael Glacier. Weather permitting, we will board the smaller vessels and cruise among the constant stream of bobbing, multi-coloured icebergs that have been calved by the rainforest-surrounded glacier, the most dynamic and actively calving glacier on the Northern Ice Cap. Again, if the weather is suitable, the ship will approach the glacier before heading toward the Quitalco Fjord. Overnight MS Skorpios II (B, L, D)

## Tuesday 28 January

### Quitalco - 'Waters of Fire'

After breakfast this morning, we disembark at the Quitalco pier, where you can enjoy a relaxing soak in the warm thermal springs, with pools inside or outside, while taking in the spectacular visual contrasts of snow-covered mountains and lush vegetation. If the weather is fine, we board smaller boats for a short excursion to the inside of the ancient Quitalco Fjord. Later in the afternoon we sail back towards Chiloé, navigating through the channels of Moraleda and Perez Norte. Overnight MS Skorpios II (B, L, D)

## Wednesday 29 January

### Islote Conejos and Dalcahue

We cross the Gulf of Corcovado very early this morning and, for the early risers, there is a chance you might see





humpback whales or blue whales in this area. Later in the morning we board small boats to visit the Islote Conejos, home to thousands of Magellanic Penguins and numerous seabirds. After lunch we sail past the islands of Lemuy and Chelin as we head to the colourful village of Dalcahue. Here we can enjoy the local handicraft markets, stroll along the promenade, and admire the World-Heritage Listed timber churches. Overnight MS Skorpios II (B, L, D)

### **Thursday 30 January** **Disembark - To Patagonia**

Following an early breakfast, we disembark our cruise in Puerto Montt and head to the airport for our flight south to Punta Arenas in Chilean Patagonia. From here, we make our way up to Puerto Natales – gateway to the stunning Torres del Paine National Park and our base for the night. Upon arrival our tour leader will provide a brief lecture, introducing the wonders of Patagonia. Overnight Puerto Natales (B)

### **Friday 31 January** **Torres del Paine National Park**

This morning we head north to the stunning Torres del Paine National Park, truly one of the world's most spectacularly beautiful parks, with peaks soaring 3km into the sky, huge lakes, surging cascades and sweeping steppes. It also sits on the edge of the Southern Ice Fields, the third-largest in the world. Along the way we may see Andean condors, among the world's largest flying birds, roadside Guanaco herds, grey foxes, brilliant wildflower displays and dripping ancient rainforests. There will be many photo opportunities en route, as well as a short walk at the hidden paradise of Lago Azul. Overnight Torres del Paine (B, L, D)

### **Saturday 1 February** **Awe-inspiring blue towers**

The Torres del Paine National Park is home to a vast array of spectacular sites and UNESCO-protected biospheres. Today we see the park's iconic Paine Massif, three iconic granite peaks sitting in the majestic centrepiece of the park. We take a leisurely walk along the lake's edge at Lago Pehoe and board a scenic cruise on Lake Grey, marvelling at the unique landscape of the Grey Glacier, a rugged, silvery-blue spectacle nourished by the Southern Patagonia Ice Field. Overnight Torres del Paine (B, L, D)

### **Sunday 2 February** **Turquoise Lakes and Sweeping Landscapes**

We continue our exploration of Torres del Paine National Park at a relaxed pace today, taking the time to absorb the unspoiled natural beauty, soak up the tranquillity and imprint the unforgettable landscapes upon our minds. This evening, our last together as a group, we enjoy a farewell dinner and recount the stories of the journey that has been. Overnight Torres del Paine (B, L, D)

## ACCOMMODATION

### **Santiago, Hotel Plaza San Francisco**

(2 nights)

### **San Pedro, Hotel Desertica**

(3 nights)

### **Iquique, Hilton Garden Inn**

(1 night)

### **Arica, Novotel Arica**

(3 nights)

### **Puerto Varas, Hotel Cumbres**

(1 night)

### **Cruise, MV Skorpios II**

(5 nights)

Twin Cabins are included in the tour price. Located on the Parthenon (3rd) deck, each has two single beds (no bunks), an ample window, private bathroom, TV, wardrobe, bedside tables, a safe and the option of background music. Cabins are upgradable subject to availability.

### **Puerto Natales, Remota Patagonia**

(1 night)

### **Torres del Paine, Kau Río Serrano**

(3 nights)

### **Santiago, Holiday Inn Santiago**

(1 night)

**or, for Extension Tour Passengers:**

### **Punta Arenas, Diego De Almagro**

(1 night)

## WEATHER

It will be summertime when we travel so there will likely be some warm days, cool but not cold nights, strong winds, and a possibility of rain, with temperatures ranging between lows around 6-8°C and highs around 28-30°C. It is advisable to bring warm clothing for Patagonia!

## FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

### **Grade Three**

This tour is among our most physically demanding. You should be able to comfortably participate in up to five to seven hours of physical activity per day, including walking at a regular pace, sometimes on uneven terrain. See our website for full details: [academytravel.com.au/fitness-requirements](http://academytravel.com.au/fitness-requirements)

## **Monday 3 February**

### **To Santiago or Punta Arenas**

Departing Torres del Paine this morning, our journey takes us south again to Puerto Natales. We stop enroute at the Cueva del Milodón, a series of natural caves cut into the Patagonian landscape. The caves contain the remains of extinct animals, such as the ground sloth, called *Mylodon darwini*, along with stories and experiences of the first human groups on the continent. These men and women, who hunted the local wild animals, sought refuge from the unpredictable Patagonian weather inside these caves, some 6,000 years ago. Continuing to Puerto Natales, we leave those finishing the tour today at the airport for a return flight to Santiago where we spend the night at an airport hotel. For those taking the post-tour extension through the Fjords of Tierra del Fuego, we instead travel on from Puerto Natales to Punta Arenas, from where our Australis cruise will depart. Overnight Santiago or Punta Arenas (B)

## **Tuesday 4 February**

### **Depart Santiago or Board in Punta Arenas**

For those in Santiago this morning, our tour concludes after breakfast. Flights are available to Sydney departing at lunchtime. For those waking up in Punta Arenas, today is at leisure before we check-in and board our cruise in the afternoon, embarking on our voyage to 'The End of the World'. See more details on the 'Post-Tour Extension' itinerary. (B)



## ENQUIRIES & BOOKINGS

For further information or to secure a place, please contact **Jamal Fairbrother** on 9235 0023 (Sydney) or 1800 639 699 (outside Sydney) or email:

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