



# RIDE WORLD WIDE ARGENTINA TO CHILE GRAND TRAVERSE 2021-2022

## RIDE INFORMATION

This 13 night riding trip begins in the Rio Negro province of Argentina, in the heart of Patagonia, and heads south from San Carlos de Bariloche, through “veranadas” (summer grazing pastures) into the Alto Chubut mountains, before crossing into Chile. The route takes you through native forests of ‘lenga’ and ‘ñire’ (southern beech trees), there are often Condors overhead, a chance to see guanaco, red deer, or even an armadillo as you ride past small settlements occupied by descendants of the nomadic Tehuelche people who have lived off this land for hundreds of years.



After a week’s riding in Argentina, the route crosses Lago Puelo by boat heading into Chile’s Puelo Valley, gateway to Chilean Patagonia. This is a fabled land of fjords, milky blue rivers, blue-green lakes, snow-capped volcanoes, hanging glaciers and green forested hills. Much of the landscape is Valdivian forest, one of only a few examples of temperate rainforests left in the world - rainforest that is home to a unique collection of animals including the threatened Chilean huemul, the Kodkod (the continent’s smallest cat) and the tree-climbing southern Pudu, the world’s smallest deer. The forests themselves contain endemic Monkey Puzzle trees, a species that has existed since the time of dinosaurs as well as living specimens of the Alerce tree, dated at over 3500 years old. The rides are organised by local teams living on the Argentine and Chilean sides of the border who have many years of experience and are passionate about their horses and the countryside. Tammy Robaina, who manages the Argentine side with her husband Dominik Marty, is Argentine born and raised and originally moved to Bariloche 30 years ago to live close to the mountains as a skiing instructor. Dominik, who is Swiss, came to Patagonia to explore by horse more than 20 years ago and fell in love with the country and way of life. Cathy Berard, your host on the lovely Isla Bandurrias in Chile, moved to the Puelo Valley over 20 years ago and, along with a loyal team of ‘baqueanos’ (horsemen), pioneered the rides in this region.

## DATES

Rides are run from set dates between November and January (see set departure dates overleaf) with other departures, shorter and tailor-made trips also possible for private groups on request. Please contact us for availability and to check options.



## HORSES

The horses used are locally bred Criollo and Chilean Horse crosses. On the Argentine section, local Creole horses owned by Tammy and Dominik are used, many of which have been homebred. They average about 15hh, are strong, sensible and very sure footed being well adapted to mountain life. They are also responsive and forward going to ride, used to the rigours of working cattle, which makes them great fun to ride. On the Chilean side, the horses are Chilean Criollos, some owned by Cathy (including a couple of pure bred Criollo Corralero Chilenos, the oldest registered stockhorse breed in all the Americas and third oldest registered breed in the Western Hemisphere), others by the baqueanos. They are generally a little smaller, averaging 14-15hh, but also strong, sensible, sure footed and forward going and responsive to ride.

## TACK

The horses are ridden in the local manner using traditional Argentine and Chilean tack which evolved to give the local cowboys maximum comfort and stability when working cattle. Saddles encourage a slightly different position to English style - feet forward, heels down, pushing into the back of the saddle to balance weight behind and in front of the centre of gravity rather than concentrating the weight in a column over one spot - but it is remarkably comfortable (helped by sheepskin covered saddles!) and secure over rough terrain and long distances. Saddlebags are provided for personal belongings, whilst main luggage is transported by pack horse.

## RIDING

The trip includes 10 full days riding (5 in Argentina and 5 in Chile), with between about 4 and 8 hours each day, and two short mornings. Full day rides are broken up with breaks to rest and for lunch. Rides are run for a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 8 guests and are lead by an experienced bi-lingual guide and accompanied by at least one back-up rider. Baqueanos prepare the horses each day.

## WEIGHT LIMIT

There is a strict rider weight limit of 89kg / 14 stone - although with plenty of prior notice some heavier riders may be catered for on request (there will generally be a charge for an extra horse - approx USD 290).

## PACE

The riding pace varies along the route according to terrain and weather, but generally the going is fairly slow as you wind along riverbanks, follow paths through thick forests, ride across shallow lakes and climb or descend quite steep mountain tracks. There are places where canters are possible - along valley floors and river banks - but the terrain always dictates the pace.

## RIDING EXPERIENCE

These rides are aimed at reasonably experienced, confident riders who are relaxed, comfortable and secure on a well-schooled horse at a walk, trot and canter. Participants should also be used to riding outside, over varied, sometimes challenging terrain with a group of horses.

**cont.**

## RIDING EXPERIENCE cont.

There are occasional interesting river crossings which require riders to be quiet and confident in the saddle and as the route crosses a remote, little visited area, you never really know what obstacles you will meet. The horses are sensible and calm, but they are also trained to be responsive so they suit confident, relaxed riders. Riders may be asked to get off to lead their horse up or down steep hills, so as well as riding experience, need to be comfortable handling a horse from the ground, walking on rough, uneven ground, both up and down hill - and of course, mounting unaided. This is a long ride and fitness is important - you will enjoy the whole experience much more if you are riding and generally fit so we strongly recommended plenty of regular riding practice before you go and a good level of general fitness.

## TERRAIN

The area you ride through is at the southern end of the Andes range and the route is interesting and varied, combining river crossings, steep climbs and paths through thick forest with open meadows, flat bottomed river valleys and (on the Argentine side of the border) rolling 'pampa'. The region's high rainfall (particularly on the Chilean side) means that much of the area is forested and there are numerous rivers, streams and waterfalls, as well as valleys with steep-sided granite cliffs and some quite high, snow-capped peaks of up to 10,000 feet. The highest passes in the area are however no more than 7,000ft (around 2,100 metres) so altitude is not really a problem.

## SAFETY

Rides are lead by an experienced English speaking guide, accompanied by at least one local back up rider, with other banqueros (horsemen) on hand at camp sites to help with the horses. A medical kit for both horses and riders is carried, as well as VHF radio and mobile 'phones for emergencies. Life jackets are provided on boats for river & lake crossings.



## ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation is in a combination of local guesthouses / hotels, mountain refuges, simple camps set up for you and local family homesteads. The first and last nights of the ride are spent at local hotel /guesthouses, where rooms are comfortable with own bathroom. Nights 2 and 3 are in mountain refuges, night 4 in a simple camp, using 'dome' tents for sleeping (3 man tents for 2 people) with inflatable mattresses provided (you will need your own sleeping bag for these 3 nights or one can be hired locally, by prior arrangement). There are no showers on these nights - washing is in mountain rivers and lakes and loos are open air. Nights 5 and 6 are at the small farm homestead of your Argentine hosts (or in yurts set up next to it). After crossing into Chile, 2 nights are spent in a simple but cozy guest cottage on the private island 'Isla las Bandurrias' in an amazing spot the middle of Lago Las Rocas, and the next 4 nights at small and simple farms, as guests of local Chilean families. Rooms in these rustic homes are simple - mainly twin or triple bedded (and in some cases just a mattress on the attic floor) with shared bathrooms, sometimes only one between the group (although short, hot showers are generally **cont.**



## ACCOMMODATION cont.

available for all). Accommodation is on a shared bases and single rooms / tents are NOT usually possible - although single hotel rooms can be booked on request for an extra charge on 2 nights.



## MEALS

Good local food is an important part of the trip and breakfast, lunch and dinner are included each day. Meals include a variety of Andean Creole-Chilean styles and are often cooked using a traditional wood burning stove, which gives local dishes a special flavour. Breakfast is at your accommodation or if camping, perhaps eggs, toast and coffee around the camp fire. Lunches are usually a picnic - perhaps bread, ham, cheese, hard boiled eggs and fruit - carried with you in saddle bags and eaten picnic style out riding. Dinners are usually 3 courses with menus varying with the season - you might start with snacks around the campfire or a soup, then a local speciality such as rainbow trout, 'brook trout' (fontinalis) or sea trout or perhaps the staple of Patagonian cuisine, a traditional barbecue "Asado al palo" or "Asado al Asador" - lamb cooked over glowing embers – accompanied by potatoes, salads and / or other vegetables. Tea and coffee is included and water from the many springs is crystal clear, safe to drink and tastes delicious. House wine is included with meals when camping and at local lodges and farmsteads, with a glass of wine included with dinners at hotels. Vegetarians will be catered for as far as possible but please give us prior notice of any special dietary requirements.

## WEATHER

Rides are run in the area's summer months, between November and January. Expected daytime temperatures at this time are in the 10°C to 25°C range - although in the mountains one always need to be prepared for changes. Weather systems coming in from the Pacific inevitably hit the Andes and weather patterns are extremely variable on both sides of the mountains - it is perfectly possible to have a snowstorm one day followed by temperatures edging 32°C the next! The Chilean side particularly has a high annual rainfall and although the lower steppe on the Argentine side has generally dry, windy summers and rainy winters, this also varies. Night time temperatures in summer generally average 5°C to 8°C but a frost is possible.

## WHAT TO BRING

We will send you a list when you book.



## ITINERARY

The following is an example of the itinerary planned - although **please note** that it is only an example and day-by-day arrangements and the route ridden may be varied by your guides at their discretion according to weather and other local conditions.

**Day 1** - Own arrangements to arrive Bariloche airport in Argentina. Take the set transfer at 13.00 or 16.00 to the hotel (about 40 minute drive) where a room has been booked for the night. Settle in and meet your guide and the rest of the group for a briefing at 18.00, followed by a traditional 'asado' (barbecue) dinner at a local restaurant. Night at hotel in Bariloche. (D)

**Day 2** - An early breakfast before driving towards the Pichileufu river, about 35 kms from Bariloche, where there are a number of family run ranches. The gauchos will prepare pack horses, loading up the main luggage, while riding horses are also be tacked up and stirrups and saddles adjusted before you set off, crossing the lands of estancia "El Condor", a cattle and sheep breeding ranch. Lunch at a small outpost and in the afternoon continue into the heart of the mountains. The first night is spent at another small outpost, surrounded by wilderness and free from sounds of the city. (about 5-6 hours riding). (B,L,D)



**Day 3** - After breakfast set off riding, firstly through gentle hills and large valleys, then ascending a path that is mainly used by local countrymen to move their cattle. Arrive the pass "Paso sin Nombre", 1.700 meters above sea level. There are beautiful rock formations and views open onto a large valley enclosed by mountains, the "Alto Chubut". Continue riding to reach an idyllic spot surrounded by native Southern beech forests (*northofagus pumilio*) where you will find a mountain refuge, an isolated shepherds hut. Dinner and night in the refuge (about 5 -7 hours riding). (B,L,D)

**Day 4** - The morning ride descends towards the Alto Chubut valley, following the tributaries of the Chubut River that, starting as mere streams in the high peaks, gradually grow into a more substantial and impressive river. The landscape is wild, sometimes almost violent, but always impressively magnificent. Camp is set up on the banks of the river and you will spend another night in this natural, pristine environment. Dinner & night in camp (5 to 6 hours riding) (B,L,D)



## ITINERARY cont.

**Day 5** - Striking camp and leave behind the forests and clear streams to descend to the Patagonian Steppe. This area is semi-desert, with native tussock grass “Coiron”, berberis bushes “calafate” and small Antarctic beech trees (northofagus Antarctica). The route leads to the shores of the Chubut river and there are signs of old human habitation including deserted corrals and an abandoned gold mine. Dinner and the night at El Sapucaí, a small farmhouse belonging to your hosts on the shores of the Chubut river (NB there is no electricity here but there is a shower with hot water!) (about 5-6 hours riding). (B,L,D)



**Day 6** - Breakfast in the farmhouse and set off riding on a route climbing up the cordillera, crossing wetlands, through forests and over rocky sections, your Criollo horse making light work of the terrain. Reach a high point to be rewarded with panoramic views of the surrounding lakes and snowy peaks. Stop for a picnic lunch at an altitude of 1800 meters before taking a different route back down again, through Nirre forests (the same Antarctic beech trees) and ancient “lenga” (large beech) woodland. Back to El Sapucaí for dinner and the night (about 5-6 hours riding) (B,L,D)



**Day 7** - The last day riding in Argentina, exploring the Alto Chubut area. Follow the Chubut River to Puesto Viejo, passing small farms, hidden away in this remote region. The inhabitants are mostly descendants of the original people: the Mapuche Indians, and they live an isolated life, hardly ever visiting a town. Meeting the back up vehicle you share a last picnic with the Argentinian baqueanos before saying goodbye to the horses and team. A two hour transfer by minibus takes you to the small town of Lago Puelo, close to Lago Puelo National Park and surrounded by mountains.

**cont. over**



## ITINERARY cont.

**Day 7 cont.** Transfer to Lago Puelo quay where you clear Argentine customs and board the boat which is waiting to take you across to Chile, navigating two lakes and the rapids between them (about 50 minutes). Leaving the boat you have a 15 minute walk to the Chilean customs control. Once procedures have been completed a short walk takes you to the shore of Lago Las Rocas. Here you meet the motorboat will take you to Isla las Bandurrias where accommodation is in a charming guest house. Dinner and the night on Isla las Bandurrias. (B,L,D)

**Day 8 -** Breakfast and a short boat ride of about 15 minutes to meet your new Chilean horses and team of baqueanos (the local horsemen) on the mainland. Mount up and head first towards the small farm of La Colina to see Chilean farm life at first hand. The ride then continues, traversing a small range of hills with views onto Lago Azul (blue lake). Finally arrive on the lake shore where you will stop for lunch. After lunch set off riding through temperate rainforest, remarkable for its antiquity and variety of flora. Narrow trails between the huge, thousand year old trees, and the majesty of the mountains will in still a sense of awe. Wend your way back to the shores of Lago las Rocas where you are met by the boat for your return to the island for dinner and the night (about 5-6 hours riding). (B,L,D)



**Day 9 -** After breakfast, a short boat trip back to the horses and then set off riding to the source of the River Puelo. Cross the Puelo River by boat, with the horses swimming alongside - it is surprising to see how well the horses take to the water. Reaching the other side, you saddle up again and continue riding to reach the remote mountain settlement of Segundo Corral. From here you ascend another mountain range before stopping for lunch in front of the incredibly blue “Las Mellizas” (the twins) lakes, surrounded by mountains. In the afternoon you descend to the valley of the Ventisqueros River which you will ford on horseback. At last you arrive at Las Rosas, the house of settlers, Olivia and her family, who offer you a very warm welcome. Dinner and the night at La Rosas (about 5-6 hours riding). (B,L,D)



**Day 10 -** After a typically hearty Chilean breakfast, saddle up and set off on a long ride following the Ventisqueros valley. There will be plenty of interesting river crossings today, as well as fabulous landscapes and a real sense of adventure. This magical valley is inhabited by only few subsistence farmers. A picnic lunch on the riverbank and perhaps time for a siesta, then in the afternoon, ride on, almost to the end of the valley, to a small house where we will be welcomed by the owner, Bernardita, your hostess for the next two nights (6 to 7 hours riding). (B,L,D )

## ITINERARY cont.

**Day 11** - Today you venture further into the valley to encounter beautiful views of the glacier that gives the valley its name. Your route crosses the "Universo" river and the property of the first inhabitant of the valley and his family. It is a very sparsely populated area and there are impressive views across the unspoiled natural environment. The ride passes through immense forests and you will cross the river several times, eventually arriving at an incredible forest of Alerce (Fitzroya Cupresoyde). Stop for lunch near the Raquelita River and in the afternoon return to Bernardita's house, perhaps in time for a swim in the clear blue river, then relax with a glass of wine before dinner (about 5 to 6 hours riding). (B,L,D)

**Day 12** - A farmhouse breakfast and back into the saddle! This morning's route takes you through beautiful ancient forest and open pampas with a number of river crossings before stopping for a picnic lunch. In the afternoon you leave the valley, crossing different properties where the settlers continue farming much as their parents and grandparents before them. The vegetation becomes dense in certain parts of the trail and eventually you arrive back at Olivia's house, Las Rosas, for your final night in the wilderness (about 6-7 hours riding). (B,L,D)

**Day 13** - A relaxing start and a good breakfast before the final stretch through the forest and along the banks of the Rio Puelo to Puerto Urrutia. Here you cross the river by boat with the horses swimming alongside. Once across, you say good bye to the horse and back-up team. A picnic lunch and then mini-bus transfer to the ferry that crosses the Lago Tagua-Tagua, then continue on to Puerto Varas taking the scenic route along the Reloncaví Estuary. The road traverses Vicente Perez Rosales national park, then follows the shores Lake Llanquihue (one of the largest lakes in South America) with dramatic views of the volcanoes Osorno and Calbuco. Farewell dinner and the night in Puerto Varas (about 1 hour riding, 4 hours road transfer and 45 minute ferry crossing). (B,L,D)



**Day 14** - Breakfast and transfer to the airport in Puerto Montt for onward journey (set transfers depart 09.00 and 12 noon). (B)

## DATES & RATES 2021- 2022

**Please note that due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, ride rates are now quoted in USD. The sterling price will be the equivalent sterling rate using the USD/sterling exchange rate in force when you book/pay.** Other dates are possible on request.

### Grand Traverse

1st to 14th November 2021

29th November to 12th December 2021

3rd to 16th January 2022

10th to 23rd January 2022

**USD 7300 per person** (based on 4-8 riders)

14 days / 13 nights; 11 days riding (between 3 and 8 hours a day)

(Single rooms only possible on 2 nights - approx additional USD 55 per night)

**Rate INCLUDES** - All riding, guiding and equipment, 13 nights shared accommodation, meals (dinner Day 1 to breakfast Day 14), wine with dinner at camps and local guesthouses (and a glass of wine with dinner at hotels - other drinks can be purchased separately), collection from Bariloche airport and return to Puerto Montt airport at set times on the first and last day and group transfers throughout the itinerary (minibus and boats).

**Rate EXCLUDES** - International flights and connections to Puerto Montt / Bariloche and taxes; transfers outside set times; personal medical / travel insurance (which you must have); any visa fees; extra drinks / bar bill at hotels; tips and any personal extras at hotels (laundry, phone calls etc).

**Single Supplement** - Single rooms / tents are NOT generally an option due to limited packing space when camping and because most of the houses in which you stay are small with limited rooms which are twin, triple or dormitory style. When staying at hotels, it is usually possible to book a single room. Please contact us for more information and details of supplement for this.

## FLIGHTS & TRAVEL INFORMATION

The start point for the ride is San Carlos de Bariloche in Argentina and you end up at Puerto Montt in Chile. There are regular daily flights from Buenos Aires Jorge Newbery (Aeroparque) domestic airport into Bariloche and will be two set transfers (13.00 and 16.00) from Bariloche airport to the first night's accommodation. At the end of the ride, there will be two set transfers (at 09.00 and 12.00) from Puerto Varas to Puerto Montt airport and from here there are regular flights to Santiago, Chile's capital.

British Airways have direct flights between London and both Buenos Aires and Santiago - so the quickest and simplest (but not the cheapest) option is to fly internationally with British Airways out to Buenos Aires and back from Santiago. Iberia, LAN Chile and Aerolineas Argentinas, all fly to Buenos Aires / Santiago via Madrid. There are also other options through Europe (eg Air France or Lufthansa) or via the USA.

Domestic flights Buenos Aires to Bariloche and Puerto Montt to Santiago can be booked with the LATAM. Budget from about £950 economy return for flights, although this varies with carrier, availability and how far in advance you book.

Another option is to book return flights London-Santiago-Puerto Montt and fly out a day or two early to take the scenic bus/boat route from Puerto Montt across to Bariloche to start the ride.

OR there are luxury overnight buses (comfortable flat-bed seats and good value) from Buenos Aires to Bariloche (about 18 hours) and from Puerto Montt to Santiago (about 13 hours) if you prefer to avoid domestic flights. Please call us for more flight and travel information or if you would like a fare quote. Our ATOL number for flight bookings is 6213.

## GENERAL VISA & HEALTH INFORMATION

(NB this is only a brief outline - further information will be sent to you if you make a confirmed booking.)

**Visas** If you hold a full British Passport and are visiting Argentina or Chile for less than 3 months, you do not need to arrange a visa in advance although visa requirements are always subject to change and you should always check up to date requirements before you travel.

**Health** No jabs are required as a condition of entry to Argentina or Chile from the UK and Europe. The Hospital for Tropical Diseases in London recommends that you ensure you are up to date Tetanus and Hepatitis A. Hepatitis B, Rabies and Typhoid may also be recommended in some circumstances. If you are not up to date with these you should visit your GP or a travel clinic about 4 weeks before departure. **(DRAFT 13/05/2021)**

