



# RIDE WORLD WIDE

## CHILE, PATAGONIA FRONTIER

### PUELO VALLEY 2021-2022

#### RIDE INFORMATION

South of Puerto Montt and nestled between the Andean Cordillera and the Pacific Ocean, the Puelo Valley is the Chilean gateway to Patagonia, an area of 1 million square miles straddling the Chilean / Argentine border as it plunges south to Tierra del Fuego. 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 neat and energetic Chilean Criollo horse is without doubt the best way to explore this magical landscape. The rides are run by a mixed Argentine-Chilean team who are passionate not only about the startling beautiful area, but also the horses that allow such extensive exploration. Your host on the beautiful Isla Bandurrias is Cathy Berard, who moved to the area in 1997 and with help from a loyal team of baqueanos (local horsemen), pioneered rides in this region.



#### DATES

Set departure rides between November and late March explore the Puelo and Ventisqueros valleys in Chile. On the Grand Traverse you also ride in Argentina - and on several itineraries you cross the border between Chile and Argentina (by boat). Please see below for departure dates. We can also arrange other departures and itineraries, and tailor-make trips for private groups. Please call us for availability and to check possible options.



## HORSES

The horses used are locally bred Chilean Criollos, some owned by Cathy Berard (including a couple of pure bred Criollo Corralero Chileno mares), others by the baqueanos (local horsemen). The Chilean Corralero is the oldest registered stock horse breed in all the Americas and the third oldest registered breed in the Western Hemisphere. The horses average 14-15hh (on the Argentine side (Grand Traverse only) the horses are a little taller), are strong, sensible, very sure footed, responsive and forward going, so great fun to ride. They are ridden in the local manner which has evolved to give the huaso (Chilean cowboy) maximum stability when working with cattle. Feet forward, heels down and pushing into the back of the saddle so the rider's weight is balanced behind and in front of the centre of gravity rather than concentrating the weight in a column over one spot, remarkably comfortable and secure over rough terrain and long distances.

## TACK

Saddles are traditional Chilean 'huaso' style (or, for the first part of the Grand Traverse only, Argentinian gaucho style). All are sheepskin covered and very comfortable for long distances. Bridles are also traditional South American style, often with a long shank. Saddlebags are always provided for personal belongings and pack horses transport luggage.

## RIDING

Hours in the saddle vary depending on the ride itinerary, and range from 4 to 8 hours riding each day, with breaks to rest and for lunch. You may also be asked to get off to lead up or down any steep hills, so you do need to be comfortable walking on uneven ground and on a gradient - and of course mount your horse unaided. Rides can be arranged for a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 10 guests (maximum 8 on Grand Traverse). Rides are lead by an experienced bi-lingual guide and accompanied by at least one back-up rider. Baqueanos prepare the horses each day and luggage is moved by pack horse.

## WEIGHT LIMIT

There is a strict weight limit of 89kg / 14 stone. Heavier riders can be catered for but there will generally be a charge for an extra horse (approx USD 290 for the ride).

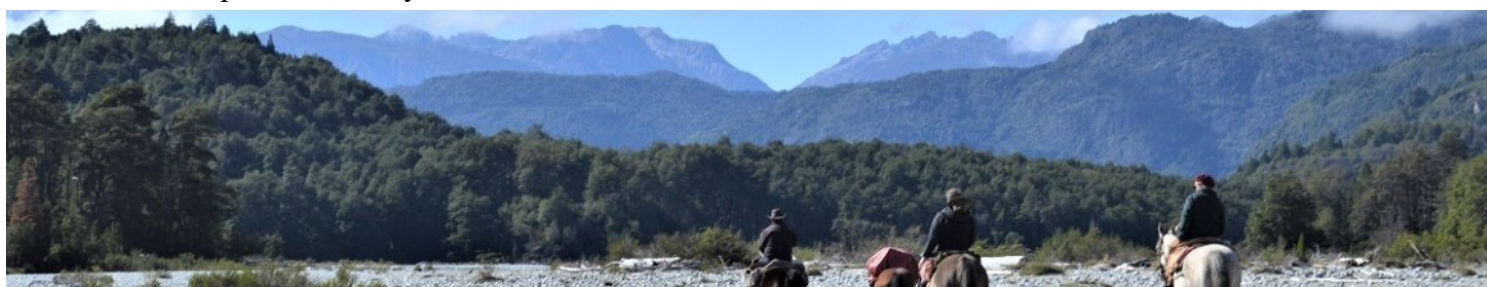


## PACE

The pace on these trips will vary depending on the route, but generally they will be at a slow pace overall as you wind along riverbanks, follow paths through thick forests, 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. The pace can be varied to some extent to suit the abilities of the group.

## RIDING EXPERIENCE

The rides are aimed at reasonably experienced, confident riders. To join them you must feel relaxed, comfortable and secure in the saddle at a walk, trot and fast canter. You should also be used to riding for reasonably long hours, in an open environment, on sometimes challenging terrain. There are occasional interesting river crossings which require riders to be quiet and confident in the saddle. The horses are sensible and calm, but they are also trained to be responsive so they suit confident, relaxed riders.





## FITNESS

As with all our rides, you will enjoy your trip much more if you are fit - both riding fit and with a good level of general fitness. There may be places where you need to dismount to walk over rough ground - both uphill and down. Even if you are in good physical shape, if you do not ride regularly at home then we recommend some concentrated training in the months before you go to get used to the hours you will spend in the saddle.

## TERRAIN

The terrain in the Tuli includes dry, open sandy plains that are dotted with acacia trees and granite outcrops, dense forests of mopani trees, groves of fever and Mashatu trees and the winding, Limpopo River. In winter, April / May to September / October, the river-bed is often completely dry and the whole region is semi-desert. In summer, after seasonal rains, it can be wet and very green with the Limpopo River running strongly and pronounced vegetation types - riverine forest, acacia woodland, open grassy plains and true savannah - creating a very different environment.



## SAFETY

Rides are accompanied by an English speaking guide as well as local guides and grooms. A medical kit for both horses and riders is carried on each trip. Life jackets are provided on boats for river & lake crossings. VHF radio and communication equipment and mobile 'phones are carried in case of emergencies.

## ACCOMMODATION

There is a range of accommodation on these rides, in the main you stay in small and simple farms as guests of local families. Rooms in these rustic homes are simple, mainly twin or triple, and in some cases they are just mattresses on the floor in the attic. Bathrooms are simple too and shared - sometimes only one between the group (though short hot showers are generally available for all). Meals are often eaten with the families. On all rides you also spend a night or two on the little heart-shaped private island of Isla las Bandurrias where you stay in a cosy guest cottage. The cottage has shared rooms for up to 6 people and a couple of bathrooms, a wood burning stove and magnificent views which can be enjoyed from the sun deck. Breakfast is eaten in the cottage and dinner is in the main house on the island where there are an additional two guest bedrooms. On the Andean Rides 3 nights are in farm accommodation and 2 nights on Isla las Bandurrias; on the Grande Traverse 2 nights are in mountain refuges, 1 night camping, 2 nights at a small farmhouse belonging to your Argentine hosts (or in yurts set up next to it), 2 nights on Isla las Bandurrias, 4 nights are in local farmhouses, and 2 nights in more comfortable hotels/ guesthouses. When Camping simple 'dome' tents are used with inflatable mattresses provided. Each 3 man tent is usually shared by 2 people and camp is set up for you on arrival. There are no showers at mountain refuges or in camps - the clear mountain rivers and lakes are used for washing and loos are open air. Meals when camping are cooked by the baqueanos over an open fire and are usually eaten around the fire. Accommodation is on a shared bases and single rooms / tents are NOT usually possible (single rooms at hotels before or after the rides, and on the 2 hotel nights of the Grand Traverse, can be booked on request for an extra charge). You will need a sleeping bag for the Grand Traverse (these can be hired locally, by prior arrangement).





## MEALS

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

With the Andes on one side and the Pacific Ocean on the other, this is an area of diverse microclimates often within surprisingly small distances and includes arid desert, high plains, Mediterranean, semi-temperate, cold and temperate rainforests and Patagonian steppes. Weather patterns are extremely variable and unpredictable. Rides are run between November and March when you can normally expect temperatures within the 15°C and 25°C range during the day, in mid summer it can be a little hotter. In the southern hemisphere spring and autumn the temperatures fluctuate between 8°C and 20°C. The average yearly rainfall in the Puelo Valley is over 2000mm and it can rain at any time of year. As you are in the mountains you need to be prepared for climate changes at any given time of year - it is possible to have a snowstorm one day followed by temperatures edging 32°C the next.

## WHAT TO BRING

We will send you a suggested clothing list when your booking is confirmed.

## ITINERARIES

The following is an example of the Andean / Andean Crossing Ride - although **please note** that it is only an example of what is planned / available and the day by day arrangements may be varied by your guides at their discretion if the weather or other local conditions require. Please enquire for the Grand Traverse & Huaso Ride itineraries.

### **Example itinerary - Andean Ride (ends Puerto Varas) & Andean Crossing Ride (ends Bariloche)**

**Day 1** - Arrive Puerto Montt airport where you will be met and driven about 40 minutes to the pretty town of Puerto Varas, situated on the shores of Lake Llanquihue. You will be taken to your hotel and at 6pm meet your guide for an introduction to the coming week. Dinner at a local restaurant. Night at a hotel in Puerto Varas. (D) [OR 5 night program - Own arrangements to arrive Puerto Varas (we can book hotels, arrange airport transfers etc) Meet your guide at 6pm for trip briefing.]

**Day 2** - You will be met from your hotel in Puerto Varas by your guide and driven along the shores of Lake Llanquihue, with views of Osorno and Calbuco volcanoes, then through the Valdivian temperate rainforest along the fjords of the Reloncavi estuary carved by glaciers that once flowed from the Patagonian icecap. **cont. over**





## ANDEAN RIDE ITINERARY cont.

**Day 2 cont** - You will pass the fishing villages of Ralún and Cochamó, before reaching the mouth of the Puelo River and then Tagua-Tagua Lake. Time for lunch at a local restaurant before crossing the lake by ferry (30 minutes). Once on the other side, you will be completely disconnected from the telephone network and from the Internet. After a 40- minute drive, you arrive at Puerto Urrutia. Here the horses and baqueanos (the local horse-men) will be waiting with horses by the river. Cross the river by motor boat, the horses swimming alongside, then load the pack horses, saddle up the riding horses and ride to the farmhouse of a local family, Tito and Olivia. Accommodation is at the farm, charming and simple, mostly in twin, triple or dormitory style rooms with shared bathrooms - and hot showers. Dinner and night at the farmhouse (about 2 hours riding and 4-5 hours transfer) (B,L,D) **OR** 5 night program (L,D)



**Day 3** - After breakfast the 'baqueanos' prepare the pack horses, loading up the main luggage. The riding horses will also be tacked up and stirrups and saddles adjusted before setting off in direction of the Ventisqueros Valley. You will ride through pristine forest where there are few inhabitants, stopping for a relaxing picnic lunch on the sandy banks of the river. In the afternoon you will ride across the Ventisqueros river to arrive in time for tea at a remote but self-sufficient homestead, belonging to Bernadita, which is your base for the next two nights. Time to relax and soak up the peace before dinner and the night. (6 hours riding) (B,L,D)

**Day 4** - Today you venture further into the valley to encounter beautiful views of the glacier that gives the valley its name. Your route crosses the "Univero" 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 Bernadita'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 5** - Breakfast and then set off on the longest day of the ride, through the forest, crossing rivers and admiring waterfalls that tumble from the mountains. Stop for a picnic lunch by the Ventisquero river and in the afternoon continue towards "la pasarela del Rio Puelo", an important local hanging bridge, once crucial for the communication between the local inhabitants and the outside world. This area is particularly spectacular due, with waterfalls and rapids. After crossing the bridge you ride on through ancient woodland to reach the shores of Lago Las Rocas. Leave the horses on the mainland and take a 10 minute boat trip to Isla las Bandurrias. Accommodation is in a charming guest house. Dinner and the night on Isla las Bandurrias (7 hours riding). (B,L,D)

**Day 6** - Breakfast and a short boat ride back to meet the horses on the mainland shore before setting off. A quick stop at the farm, La Colina, then continue to Lago Azul (Blue Lake), known for its crystal clear waters and abundance of fish. Picnic and a siesta on the shores of the lake. After lunch head deep into the Valdivian Forest, with its ancient Alerce trees, before arriving back at Lago las Rocas where you are met by the boat for your return to the island. Dinner and the night on Isla las Bandurrias (4-5 hours riding). (B,L,D)



## ANDEAN RIDE ITINERARY cont.

**Day 7 - November to January (Andean Crossing):** After breakfast, and the boat trip back to the baqueanos and horses, set off on a morning ride (about 1 hours ride) to the Mountain Police Station at Paso El Bolson. After clearing Chilean customs and immigration continue on foot, about 15 minutes, to the shores of Lago Puelo where you take a boat across the lake (about 50 minutes) to the Argentine border on the far shore.

After Argentine border formalities a minibus will be waiting to transfer you about 20 minutes to El Bolson for a late lunch at a local restaurant. You should have a little time for shopping and to explore before driving on to the town of Bariloche (about 3 hours).

**February & March (Andean Ride):** After breakfast, and the boat trip back to the mainland and then a short ride to La Colina farm (your luggage will be taken separately). Here a minibus will be waiting to take you to the ferry across Tagua - Tagua Lake. A picnic lunch and then drive on to Puerto Varas, first following the Reloncaví Estuary. There are wonderful views of National Park of Vicente Perez Rosales as the road skirts Lake Llanquihue, and the volcanoes of Osorno and Calbuco set a stunning back drop. Arrive back at the pretty town of Puerto Varas on the shores of Lake Llanquihue (about 1 hour riding; 4 hours driving and 45 minute ferry crossing).

**5 night program** - Own arrangements for onward travel. (we can book hotels / transfers if required) (B,L)

**7 night program** - Farewell dinner at a local restaurant. Night at a hotel in Puerto Varas. (B,L,D)

**Day 8** - Breakfast and transfer about 40 minutes to Puerto Montt airport for onward travel. (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.

**Andean Crossing Ride (start Puerto Varas / end Bariloche)** 6 days riding, average 5-6 hours a day

22nd to 29th November 2021\* 21st to 26th December 2021

**5 nights: USD 3900 per person; \*7 nights: USD 4150 per person; (4-10 riders)**

**Andean Ride (start / end Puerto Varas)**

20th to 27th January 2022\* 28th February to 7th March 2022\*

28th February to 7th March 2022\*

4th to 11th February 2022\* 12th to 17th March 2022

12th to 17th March 2022

**5 nights: USD 3500 per person; \*7 nights: USD 3900 per person; (2-10 riders)**

**Grand Traverse** 14 days / 13 nights; 11 days riding, average 7-8 hours a day

1st to 14th November 2021      3rd to 16th January 2022

3rd to 16th January 2022

29th November to 12th December 2021 10th to 23rd January 2022

10th to 23rd January 2022

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

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

**Huaso Ride** 7 days riding, average 5-6 hours a day

House Rule 7: days filming, a average 9-10 hours a day	
15th to 21st February 2022	25th to 31st March 2022

25th to 31st March 2022

**6 nights: USD 3780 per person; 8 nights: USD 4180 per person; (2-10 riders)**

**NOTE** - 5 night Andean & 6 night Huaso Ride itineraries do not include accommodation in Puerto Varas or Bariloche (which you will need in most cases), leaving you free to choose / book your own hotel.

**Rates INCLUDE** all meals (including some wine with dinner); shared accommodation; guides, back-up & equipment; horses (riding and pack); group transfers (minibus and boats);

Rates **EXCLUDE** flights / travel to Puerto Montt / Bariloche and taxes; personal medical / travel insurance (which you must have); any visa fees; tips; extra nights accommodation (eg in Puerto Montt / Bariloche)

**Single Supplement** - Single rooms / tents are NOT generally an option as most of the houses in which you stay are small with limited rooms which are twin, triple or dormitory style. It is usually possible to book a single room on nights spent in hotels for an extra charge. Please contact us for more information.



## FLIGHTS & TRAVEL INFORMATION

The meeting point for the Andean & Huaso Rides is Puerto Varas which is close to Puerto Montt airport, in the Chilean Lake District. There are regular daily flights from Santiago, Chile's capital, to Puerto Montt, with LAN Chile and also Sky Airlines. There is also an extensive network of buses (for example TurBus and Pulman) which are comfortable (flat bed seats), convenient and safe - the journey by bus from Santiago to Puerto Montt takes about 14 hours. British Airways have direct flights from London to Santiago; Iberia and LAN Chile fly to Santiago via Madrid, and TAM Brazil have flights via Sao Paulo. You can also fly with a combination of British Airways and LAN Chile or Aerolineas Argentinas to Santiago, via Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo or Miami. American Airlines also have flights via New York and Air France via Paris. Flights will cost from about £850 economy return, depending on the airline and season.

The start point for the Grand Traverse is Bariloche in Argentina and there are regular daily flights from Buenos Aires Jorge Newbery (Aeroparque) domestic airport into San Carlos de Bariloche. British Airways currently have daily flight departures to Buenos Aires, usually leaving London Heathrow at about 21.00 arriving Buenos Aires at about 09.30 the next day. Iberia and Aerolineas Argentinas also have daily flights from London via Madrid to Buenos Aires. Other options are via the continent (eg Air France or Lufthansa) or via the USA. Fares to Buenos Aires start at about £850 per person economy return although this will vary depending on availability and how far in advance you book.

You can also fly to Puerto Montt via Santiago and take scenic bus/boat route across to Bariloche to start the ride. Again there are also luxury overnight buses (comfortable flat bed seats and good value) from Buenos Aires to Bariloche, the bus journey takes about 18 hours.

Please call us for more flight information or if you would like a fare quote. Our ATOL number for flight bookings is 6213.

## GENERAL VISA & HEALTH INFORMATION

NB this is 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)

