



# AUTUMN IN THE MOUNTAINS

PATAGONIA NATIONAL PARK | MARCH 26 - APRIL 3, 2027

---



## EXPEDITION VISION

The changing of one year for another gives a chance to pause, reflect, and take a next step forward with intention and conviction. This expedition uses this moment of transition (on one hand, arbitrary, on the other hand, a powerful symbol) to explore the power of a long walk in the wilderness to explore the closing of one cycle and the opening of another. Longer than many of our expeditions, this full park traverse offers sustained challenge, diverse landscapes, and ample time for walking reflection.

---



## EXPEDITION DETAILS

### *Key Points:*

- Expedition begins and ends at the Balmaceda airport (BBA), Chile
- Our center of operations, and where you'll spend the first and last night, is Puerto Guadal
- Hiking in and around Patagonia National Park
- Access via van rides, including road trip up the Carretera Austral
- First half on-trail hiking, with some sections / days primarily off trail; second half mostly off-trail
- Notable hazards include glacial river crossings, steep terrain, and challenging weather
- We'll ask participants to bring personal gear; [gear list here](#)
- Estimated pack weight: 25 - 35 lbs



## CHULENGO'S APPROACH

Chulengo Expeditions immerse curious backpackers in spectacular landscapes, in Patagonia's rich natural and human history, and in the power of wilderness to offer space for reflection, connection and growth.

We call our style "lightweight guiding:" we teach outdoor skills and natural history, organize logistics, manage risk, and facilitate community, while asking each participant to contribute to the work of outdoor travel and communal living. Participants should expect to carry their personal gear plus 3-5 days of group food and cook gear (~12lbs). We travel with no porters. Around camp, we'll rely on you to set up and take down tents, pack packs, and contribute to cooking shared meals.

Our hope is that an expedition with Chulengo combines the best parts of traveling with friends with the best parts of an organized expedition, with space for learning, reflection, honest conversation and laughter.



*Day 1 (March 26): Welcomes and Arrival*

Plan to arrive to Balmaceda, Chile (BBA) by 2:30pm at latest (there are numerous flights a day; late morning or early afternoon flights will work well for those arriving to Chile on an overnight flight). Our van will meet you at the airport. From there, you'll drive south (4 - 5 hours) to the small town of Puerto Guadal, where we have our base. After arriving, you'll settle into a shared cabin with your expedition-mates, and meet your expedition leaders for a simple welcome dinner and orientation chat.

*Note: many past participants have enjoyed spending a day or two in Santiago, Chile before the expedition, which is also useful for giving some buffer time for any delayed international flights.*



*Views across Lago General Carrera to the Northern Icefield, from Puerto Guadal*

*Day 2 (March 27):*

Over breakfast, your Chulengo leaders will review the route and give details on packing your pack, including group gear and food, before departing by bus for the remote Jeinimeni trailhead of Patagonia National Park, traveling through the historic Paso de las Llaves en route to Chile Chico, and from there into the park, about 3 hours total. Our trek through Patagonia National Park starts winding along the shores of Lago Jeinimeni, on a track formerly used by gauchos who used this route to bring livestock to market. The lake sits in a dramatic valley between brightly colored red and green mountains, which practically beg for a lesson in geology.

Toward the end of our day, we'll arrive at the spectacular Camp Raleigh, tucked on the shores of aptly named Lago Verde. We keep the mileage of this day intentionally short, to make time for teaching

---

outdoor skills, building routines, and settling into the mountains. We'll set up tents and kitchens, giving details and coaching tips along the way. After cooking our first dinner together, we'll gather to share our goals for the trip and brainstorm how to best support each expedition member.

Distance: 5 miles      Elevation gain: 300 ft.



*The gem-like spot, surrounded by river and lake, at Camping Raleigh*

*Day 3 (March 28):*

Our day begins with a moment to reflect and observe the landscape around us, sinking into a quieter sense of connection with place. As we set off for the day, we'll learn about the native plants of the southern beech forest we travel through, before entering a dramatic glacial valley that leads to the day's major challenge: the pass to the far shore of Lago Verde. From the top of the pass, we'll enjoy dazzling views of Lago Verde and Valle Hermoso stretching out behind us, one of the iconic views of the new

---

park. We'll take our time navigating a steep descent, then make our way across Valle Hermoso, crossing our first more major rivers, where we'll discuss proper river-crossing techniques. We'll likely arrive to our camp, the forested Refugio Valle Hermoso, with some time to spare, which offers the chance for afternoon swims in the glacial river, reading, or impromptu yoga. In the evening, we'll gather to learn more about the history of this valley and the establishment of Patagonia National Park.

Distance: 6 miles      Elevation gain: 1200 feet



*Valle Hermoso lives up to its name (“Beautiful Valley”)*

*Day 4 (March 29):*

From our forest camp, we emerge back into the spectacular landscape of Valle Hermoso, crossing braided rivers with views of impressive glaciers upvalley. We make our way over a low pass, through a stunning section of pristine southern beech forest and then out into the open, with sweeping panoramic

---

views into the Aviles Valley. Oftentimes, this section lends itself to a (guided) solo hike, which offers a moment to think about the big questions, or about nothing at all! Toward the afternoon, we cruise downhill to a midway point in the Aviles Valley, where we set up camp beneath colorful peaks and waterfalls. We'll camp at the border of grasslands and forest, and in the evening, we'll gather to celebrate the New Year together!

Distance: 10 miles    Elevation gain: 1000 feet



*Forest, glaciers and mountains from the pass between Valle Hermoso and the Aviles Valley*

### *Day 5 (March 30)*

This morning we set off down the Aviles Valley, through dramatically changing scenery. The forested upper valley gives way to rugged canyons and unusual topography, such as the bright-red Cerro Pintura. We cross a high hanging footbridge over the canyon and continue our hike into the main Chacabuco Valley, arriving at the Casa Piedra frontcountry campsite, a historic settlement from the valley's ranching days. There, we pick up a resupply, and perhaps enjoy some fresh veggies and a (lukewarm) shower.

---

Distance: 10 miles    Elevation gain: 1500 ft.

### Day 6 (March 31)

Designed as a reset toward the midpoint of our journey, this day will begin with unstructured time to sleep in, read, do laundry, sketch... however you'd like to use some hours of stillness! Toward the early afternoon, we'll depart from Casa Piedra, and head up toward the hidden Lago Gutierrez, and then begin to encircle the lake, at times, climbing high above a cliff band. Once we reach the far side of the lake, we'll camp in a remote spot, and enjoy this quiet spot.

Distance: 5 miles    Elevation gain: 1000 feet

Day 7 (March 31): A challenging, satisfying day! We make our way up a high pass through the Cordon Chacabuco, and down to Laguna la Guagua on the far side. Consistent elevation gain and relatively little drinking water along the route play a role in the difficulty, but the views make the climb worthwhile. We camp on the shores of Laguna la Guagua.

Distance: 7 miles    Elevation gain: 2700 ft



---

*Up and around Lago Gutierrez: just one of the beautiful and challenging sections of this big day*

*Day 8 (April 2):* So many lakes! We wind our way along the shoreline of Laguna La Guagua, and then around numerous lakes, big and small, with consistent elevation gain and loss, transitioning often between the grasslands, wetlands, and southern beech forest. We arrive to the “Los Huemules” trailhead, where we meet the bus, and drive two hours back to Puerto Guadal. There, we enjoy hot showers and a celebratory final dinner!

Distance: 10 miles    Elevation gain: 3000 ft

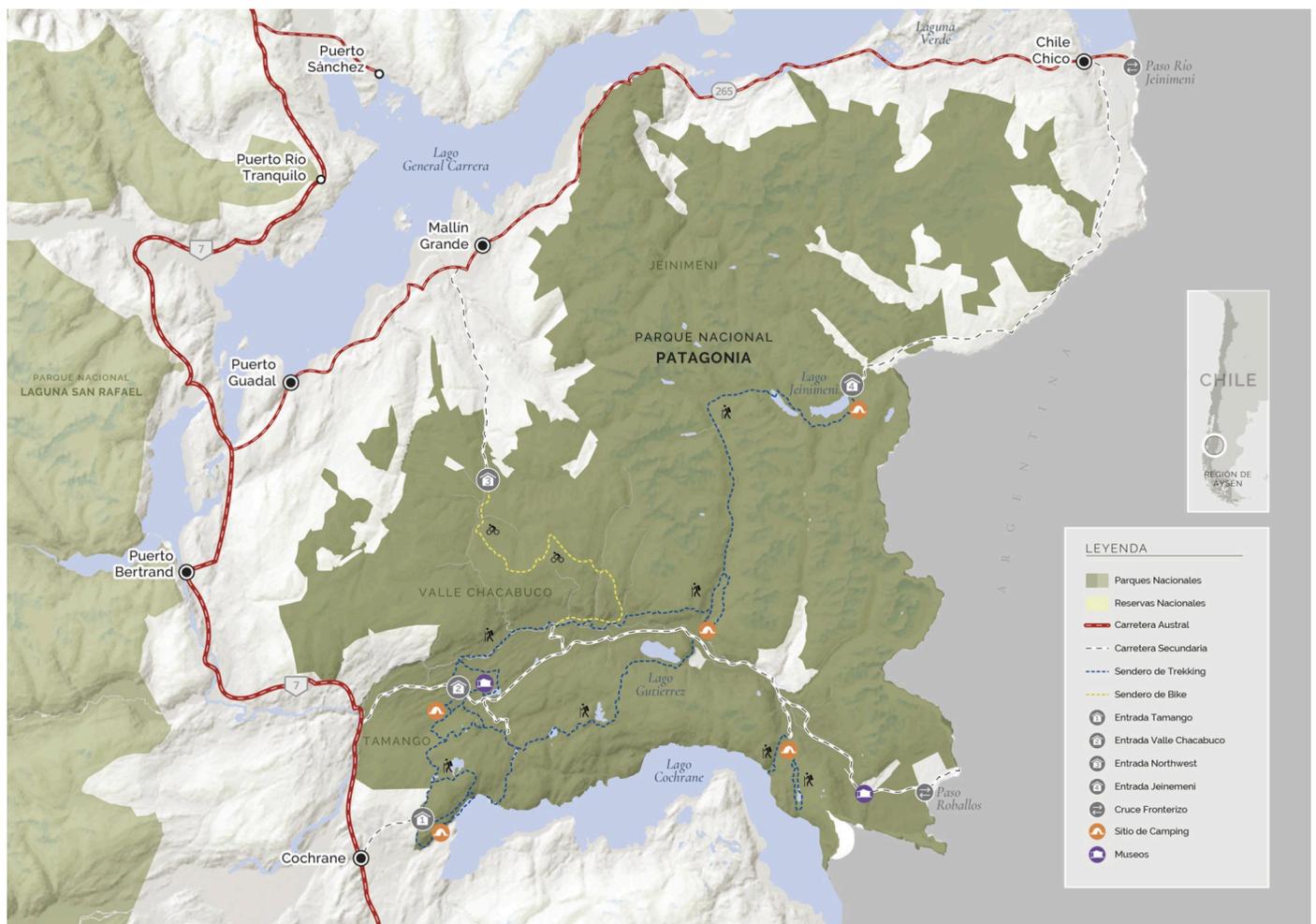
*Day 9 (April 3) :* Road trip north! We wake early to head north up the Carretera Austral, or “Southern Highway,” often called one of the world’s great road trips. We’ll drive along the western border of Lago General Carrera, then through the temperate rainforest, and finally to the Rio Ibanez valley, with incredible views of Cerro Castillo. We can either drop you at the Balmaceda airport (for flights 3pm or later) or in Coyhaique, depending on your departure plans.

Transfer time: 6 hours



## PATAGONIA NATIONAL PARK

Comprising 750,000 acres—over the size of Yosemite National Park—of some of Chile’s most diverse and ecologically vibrant landscapes, Patagonia National Park gives wilderness travelers a wild, immersive experience in landscapes that remain quiet and relatively unexplored. The park offers space for reflection and reconnection with the natural world, with only a few thousand visitors traveling to this park annually, and only a fraction venturing into the backcountry. Established through a public-private partnership between the Chilean government and [Tompkins Conservation](#), Patagonia National Park represents a landmark rewilding initiative for Latin America.



## MOMENTS AND RHYTHMS

---

Each day in the backcountry unfolds organically, but we tend to fall into certain rhythms, and make space for moments worth savoring.

For some of us, a quiet sit with a cup of coffee, scanning the valley for wildlife, is worth waking up a touch early for. Others might join just in time for breakfast—maybe oatmeal, granola or chia pudding. Sharing some morning laughs, we roll into packing up camp, then pause before leaving for a stretching session, led by a member of the group, and a quiet moment of reflection.

Hiking in smaller pods, each guided by a Chulengo leader, offers a more intimate, fluid rhythm; the hours pass easily, alternating between expansive conversation, giddy laughter, and easy silence. When we encounter a particularly appealing spot, we'll stop for lunch and views, discussing some element of Patagonian ecology or sharing a joke.

Days will vary in length, but once we reach camp, we'll organize food and group gear before setting up tents, then have a bit of free time for reading, wildlife-watching, bathing or general relaxing. A few members of the group will jump into preparing dinner for their cook groups.

There's a wonderful feeling of community and accomplishment as we share a warm, tasty dinner at the end of a solid day of hiking. Whether creamy pasta or lentil curry, delicious food nourishes our bodies and rejuvenates spirits. After dinner, we'll gather as a group to share conversation and reflection – perhaps “hot seats” from group members, a discussion on wilderness ethics, or a silly game. These evening circles have stood out as a highlight for past participants, offering a chance to delve deeper into exchange and peel back layers of understanding. We'll conclude the evening with a quick overview of the plan for tomorrow, and then transition into unstructured time and cozy nights of sleep.



---

## WHO IS THIS A FIT FOR?

Chulengo's approach combines the learning focus of outdoor and environmental education, the team spirit of a personal expedition, and the risk management and support of a guided trip. We teach the backcountry skills that you need to live comfortably and move competently through the wilderness, and tailor instruction to a range of experience levels, such that both a novice backpacker and an experienced wilderness hiker can thrive on the same expedition. While participants don't need to have backpacking experience prior to joining an expedition (in fact, many past participants have not!), we do find that expeditions are more rewarding if everyone:

- Relishes the chance to live outdoors throughout all weather that Patagonia might bring
- Prepares themselves to hike 12 miles a day, with up to 3,500 feet of elevation gain, with a ~35lb pack
- Enjoys diving into group conversations and community building and working cooperatively with others
- Embrace the risk and uncertainty that's inherent to remote backcountry travel

Most groups include students with a wide range of outdoor experience and fitness levels; we've found the most important factor is setting clear expectations around the backcountry nature of this expedition—ie, we sleep in tents, carry our own gear, and are fully off the grid for the entire expedition.

