

ADVENTUREX

WITHOUT ADVENTURE... WHAT IS LIFE?

Christmas In Patagonia **Futaleufu, Chile**

There are few places more special to spend your Christmas vacation than the Futaleufu Valley. Described by the locals as "a place so lovely it must have been painted by God", this is an experience not to be missed. And the Rio Futaleufu is no ordinary river. Born in the Los Alerces National Park in Argentina it flows west into Chile, through landscapes dominated by snow capped volcanoes and rich rain forest before arriving at the coastal town of Chaiten. Meaning 'Great River' in the local Mapuche dialect, the astonishingly clear waters of the 'Fu' flows through deep canyons and pristine wilderness to create explosive and untamed whitewater, unparalleled to anywhere in the world. This trip is designed to immerse you in the beauty, magic and culture of Patagonia. Half a world away from the cold northern Christmas, you will be treated to a five star festive meal at our luxurious lodge on the banks of the river, sipping fine Chilean red wine as you bask in the splendour of the Chilean summer with the distant rumble of the much anticipated rapids just within earshot.

Your Itinerary

Day 1:

On arrival in Puerto Montt you will be met by your AdventureX trip leader and transferred to your hotel in the charming little town of Puerto Varas, where you can unwind from your journey. Situated on the edge of Lake Llanquihue you will be treated to the first of many spectacular settings with views across the water towards the perfect backdrop of Volcan Osorno. The afternoon is yours to relax or explore this delightful fishing village.
(No meals included)

Day 2:

After breakfast we will transfer back to Puerto Montt and board a small aircraft for the short flight to Chaiten (approx 40minutes). We will begin the final part of your journey to the river, the drive along the Carretera Austral towards the little town of Futaleufu. Bear in mind that this area of southern Chile has only been accessible by road for the past twenty years, one of few chances in the world to visit such unspoilt wilderness. We pause for lunch overlooking deep turquoise lakes, amidst magnificent granite cliffs and steep glaciers, visions that rival anywhere else in the world. Along this spectacular drive we will pass small farms seemingly untouched by time, giving us our first glimpses of frontier living. And past Lago Yelcho, a world-class trout fishing lake into which the Futaleufu River flows. This is also home to the Coho Salmon that swim unimpeded up the river to spawn. This is unquestionably one of the few remaining fishing paradises on the planet. By late afternoon we will arrive at camp in time for a leisurely float down the scenic lower section of the river, sampling the fine local wines and cheeses along the way.

Day 3: Christmas Day:

With the eagerly anticipated arrival of Santa, the morning is likely to begin early, but that's up to you. A champagne breakfast with fresh fruits and breads awaits you. The morning is spent relaxing around camp before we will make our way up one of the surrounding peaks to be rewarded with a stunning panorama of brilliant, white glaciers amidst majestic bush laden mountains. By early afternoon we will have returned to camp to enjoy a feast of culinary creations prepared by our guides. Turkey, ham, roast vegetables and fresh salads followed with the traditional Kiwi festive dessert, a Pavlova. We will even make sure you all get to pull the customary Christmas crackers. And if there is anything specific that would make things particularly special for you then we will endeavour to add this to our menu as well. We anticipate that the evening's celebrations may go on well into the night...this is Christmas, Patagonia style!

Day 4:

You will awaken to the sounds of nature, the steady flow of the river past camp and the busy morning chorus of the local birdlife. Enjoy a hearty breakfast in this wonderful setting - this must be one of the ultimate ways to spend Christmas Eve. Our guides and trip leaders are seasoned professionals in their fields. Your safety is their number one priority. We take time with a comprehensive talk on safety and paddling instructions to get you accustomed to your new mode of transport, whether or not you have done this before. Depending on crews and water levels, we may opt for the Bridge to Bridge or Bridge to Casa sections today, both reputedly some of the best rafting sections anywhere in the world. We start at La Passarella, one of many suspended rope bridges used by locals to cross the river and we immediately plunge into some exhilarating whitewater fun with 'Thousand Wave' rapid, smashing through 'Pillow Wave' and into 'Mundaca'. We take out at Futaleufu Bridge after our first thrilling day on the river... this is only the beginning.

Day 5:

Our luxurious camp, situated above the town of Futaleufu, encompasses small cabanas nestled within the native bush on the banks of the river. Enjoy your morning coffee on your veranda as the clear waters run quite literally beneath you. After breakfast we launch the rafts and float down towards the magnificent Inferno Canyon where 4km of adrenalin-surgingly whitewater awaits us. With its steep sides and deep clear pools we enter into an area of complete remoteness as we head towards "Tres Nonas". With a flat section to follow there is plenty of time to sit back, reflect and marvel at the serenity of this beautiful place. However in the distance the roar of the infamous "Zeta" or 'Z' can be heard as we enjoy lunch at a scenic spot by the river. This rapid is not commercially runnable and so the rafts are portaged through before we again take a leisurely float in preparation for the might of "El Throno". Perhaps one of the fastest and most spectacular rapids in the world we may also opt to portage this rapid, depending on water levels, but not before marvelling at kayakers trying to avoid "Toaster" as they negotiate this exciting course. No matter by which route, they will be at the bottom in a matter of seconds. Following El Throno is a gorgeous whitewater section we term 'the Magic Mile'. Our vehicles will meet us at the Rio Azul and we return to camp for a well-deserved soak in the hot tub!

Day 6:

Freshly baked bread and Eggs Benedict is on the menu this morning, with the standard fresh brew of coffee. We have another great day ahead of us. A few, fun warm up rapids before we reach the legendary "Terminator". Depending on river levels, crew aptitude and ability we may need to portage this one..... because it's BIG!... actually it's a bit BIGGER than BIG! This is the largest Class 5 "sneak line" we run on any of our trips worldwide. And if that isn't enough for you there is the superb "Khyber Pass" and the hugely exciting "Himalayas" to finish the day. On our return to camp we enjoy a sumptuous meal washed down with a Pisco Sour or a glass of fine Chilean red wine.

Day 7:

Some Chilean style activity for you today. In this area of Patagonia the horse is still used as a regular means of transport by the Gaucho (cowboy) so for all you budding cowboys and cowgirls a gorgeous scenic horse ride alongside the Rio Azul is planned. Under the expert tuition of our guides and local horsemen you will be treated to magnificent views up the valley to the glaciers. After a relaxed riverside lunch of fresh cold meats and salads a casual ride back to camp with plenty of time for a chat with local farmers as they check out your horse handling skills. Back at camp that evening there will be time to organise a little fly-fishing excursion for those hoping to tempt the trout.

Day 8:

The morning's rafting begins with a blast through the centre of 'Mundaca' once again, to ensure we are truly awake. Followed by another amazing stretch of water with 'The Fish Bowl' and 'Aquarium Wave', and the aptly named 'House Rock' to finish. Enjoy the evening relaxing those muscles in our wood powered hot tub after another 'hard day at the office'.

Day 9:

After a filling breakfast you will have the opportunity to practice your newly found river skills, getting the chance to steer your own craft today. With our raft and our inflatable 'duckies' (2 person inflatable canoes), we journey up to the Rio Azul, a fun grade 2 river. Our guides will give you top tips on how to negotiate rapids and read the river. All day our neighbours and good friends, Carlos and Alicia, have been preparing a feast of salads, fresh meats and breads. The evening is spent experiencing real Chilean hospitality with good beer, fine wine and excellent foods and recounting your stories from the past week. What a way to celebrate the beginning of the New Year!

Day 10:

Today you choose which sections of this fantastic river you would like to take on for one final epic run. Often, unanimously, this ends up being the "Terminator to Casa de Piedra" section, surely one of the most exciting days rafting anywhere in the world.

(Included: Breakfast, lunch and dinner days 2-10)

Day 11:

An early start is required this morning in order to meet the van that will take you back to Chaiten for your flight back to Puerto Montt, and your onward journey back to Santiago and home.

(Included: Breakfast)

The Details

What Is Included:

- Transfers between Puerto Montt and Chaiten and to the river. If you provide us with your arrival details in Puerto Montt we will meet you at the airport.
- Accommodation the night before the river trip in a tourist hotel (Day 1). This will be on a share twin basis with someone also on your river trip. Single supplements are available
- All transfers to and from the river.
- All meals from breakfast on Day 2 to breakfast on Day 11. We can cater for any dietary requirements, just let us know.
- All necessary rafting equipment, including the best in buoyancy aids, helmets, full length wetsuits (men's and women's fit) and spray jackets.
- Lodge accommodation whilst on the river.
- All camping equipment excluding sleeping bags.
- Fully qualified, experienced river guides and safety kayakers. We have a mixture of local and overseas guides who are extremely professional and make up one of the most experienced river teams in the world. They make every effort to make your trip one of the most memorable, optimising your fun without compromising on your safety. They all hold advanced first aid qualifications and in the unlikely event of an injury they have the expertise and professionalism to deal with it.
- All necessary permits and licenses.
- A very cool AdventureX T shirt!

Please Note: Not included are flights, visas, departure taxes, travel insurance, inoculations, sleeping bags, video or DVD of your trip, alcohol, personal items or gratuities. You will also need to budget for meals in town that are not included in the price and any extra accommodation outside of what is provided.

Getting There:

There are a range of possibilities to get you down to Chile, plus plenty of bargains if you shop around.

From the UK & Europe

We recommend taking a flight with LAN Chile /Iberia from the UK to Santiago via Madrid. This may seem like a long route but we find this to be one of the best options for availability and price. Other options however would be American Airlines or Delta through the USA or with Air Canada via Toronto. We suggest you book your connection to Puerto Montt from Santiago at the same time as you will get the best deal. It is important to note when booking your return flights from Puerto Montt back to Santiago that you will not get back from Chaiten until 1300 hours at the earliest. Our team in the UK will happily offer their advice and help you to find the best deal.

From the USA

From the USA the principal gateways to South America are via Miami, New York City and Los Angeles. Daily flights are offered with LAN Chile, United, American, Aerolineas Argentinas or with Air Canada from Toronto. Once again we suggest you purchase your Santiago / Puerto Montt tickets at the same time, as purchasing later will prove to be more costly. Please note that your return flight from Chaiten does not arrive in Puerto Montt until 1300 hrs at the earliest so please schedule your onward flights with time to spare.

Exploring Chile:

Chile is rich with outdoor options for those inclined. The Torres Del Paine circuit is perhaps one of the most famous and spectacular trekking areas in South America with its dramatic granite peaks and glacial lakes it is internationally renowned as one of the most beautiful and remote areas in the world.

The resort town of Pucon with its backdrop of the Volcan Villarica looming behind is set amidst National Parks and is not to be missed. And if you like heights then consider reaching the summit of Mount Aconcagua, the highest point in the western hemisphere...not for the faint hearted however.

The Atacama Desert is further north and is the driest desert in the world. The town of Pedro de Atacama offers many attractive facilities for tourists. On the other hand if you want to do more on the water the southern fjords of Chile offer great sea kayaking opportunities around Las Termas de Chillan. If you would like any further information please contact us or we also suggest checking out the Lonely Planet guide on Chile.

Transport Services:

The Chilean bus service is quite good, especially if you speak Spanish, however, since Chile is a long slender country travelling to different parts can take some time. It can take two days to travel by bus from Chaiten, the port nearest to Futaleufu, to Santiago, so we would definitely recommend flying, especially if your time is limited. While in Santiago you can get around by taxi or by bus, or the subway is a clean, cheap and amazingly easy way to get around.

The Jabs:

We recommend that you be immunized against Hepatitis A and Tetanus.

Exploring Santiago:

If you have an extra day and night in Santiago we suggest you visit the Plaza de Armas in the centre of the city, where Augusto Pinochet ousted Salvador Allende in the now famous coup. Or check out Bellavista, where you can find longhaired poets reciting their latest creations, fishbowl size bowls of beer ('Shop', as it is locally known), and some crazy late-night discos. The subway system is an excellent and easy way to get about the city and is cheap.

Exchange Rates:

At time of printing USD\$1 was worth 542 Chilean Pesos and GBP £1 equal to 995 Chilean Pesos.

Retail Therapy and Chilean Specialties:

Chile is not renowned for its crafts (unless you want to take home a lump of coal or copper), however, being close to Bolivia and Peru, one can shop for beautiful alpaca sweaters and hats. For the red wine lovers, Chile offers some of the best red wine around. If you are a fish lover, we recommend the local Ceviche. Boasting the longest cold-water coast of any country in the world, Chilean Sea Bass is AMAZING!

River Flows:

The 'Fu' is a fairly high volume river with extremely large and demanding rapids. In December, when the water is at its highest, some of the rapids occasionally become too large to run. The river levels remain very unpredictable, however the best probability of good water levels fall between the end of December and the end of February. This offers the best combination of weather and water.

Climate and Clothing:

In the southern hemisphere, the summer season falls from December to March so typically at this time we experience some wonderful weather but at times it can get cold, after all, we are in the Andes. Make sure to bring plenty of sunscreen and lip balm. The water is glacier and snow melt and is cool, but don't worry we supply you with wetsuits and spray jackets as required. If you have any long synthetic underwear we highly recommend this as well to wear under your wetsuit. The weather in Patagonia can be changeable so do bring a rain jacket as well. Evenings and nights will be chilly, 15-20 degrees so you should definitely bring a fleece and woolly hat for the evenings around the campfire.

Fitness and Safety:

Safety is our foremost consideration at all times whether on or off the river. All our guides are chosen for their extensive international experience and are considered professionals within their field. They each have at least 10 years running rivers around the globe. All have first aid qualifications of the highest standard including at least one medic on

each trip. And we carry an extensive First Aid kit and Satellite Telephone with us at all times. We run a safety kayaker alongside every raft (unmatched by other companies) and also extra support from a cataraft. All our AVON paddle rafts are specially designed and your paddle guide will be using 2 large oars in which to provide you with that extra power when tackling the bigger rapids. The Futaleufu is a fairly high volume river with extremely large and demanding rapids and this is an extremely adventurous and rigorous trip. And a huge amount of fun! We recommend that you exercise regularly: running, walking or swimming, at least a month or two before the trip, in order to maximize your fun on this amazing river. Please let us know if you have any medical conditions or are taking any medications that you think we should be aware of.

Dress Code:

Dress is casual around camp. Away from camp and in towns, conservative non-revealing attire is best.

Personal Equipment:

After years on the river the guides have found exactly what is necessary to feel comfortable on the raft by day, cosy around the camp at night and totally in style in town before and after the trip. Therefore our equipment list will mean that you will be perfectly attired and outfitted for your whole trip and well under the baggage. A full list of what we recommend will be sent to you after your booking confirmation. We find that most people already have in their possession what is necessary for a river trip and very little else in the way of specialised equipment is required. Perhaps the only thing that we specifically recommend for Chile is PLENTY of sunscreen!

Finally...

Please remember that things do change, prices go up and down, activities stop running or change format and weather can send the best laid plans out the door. AdventureX will do it's best to provide what is described above but please take into consideration the nature of the journey that you are embarking on and the country that you are travelling in and understand that a certain degree of flexibility is necessary!

This trip offers something for everyone and we want you to experience the best holiday you have ever had. What a way to spend Christmas and New Year, with new friends in this unique and beautiful environment that is the REAL Patagonia.

We look forward to seeing you there!