



Pre-Trip Patagonia



Essential Information for our trips in the Region

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Introduction

Patagonia is a vast and diverse region, with scenery ranging from dramatic mountain formations and smoky volcanoes to flat barren pampa and expansive ice fields.

At the far south of the Andes is the Torres del Paine National Park, one of the most impressive sights in the Southern Hemisphere. The dramatic mountain formations are crowded with glaciers, lakes, fjords, ancient forests and wildlife such as guanacos, flamingos, condors, ñandus and huemules also offer some of the most magnificent trekking and nature in the world.

Chilean Patagonia: discover the magic at the end of the world! Torres del Paine has been declared world heritage site. It has unlimited beauty and adventure to offer, with glaciers, lakes, mountains, wild flowers and birds, trekking and horseback riding to choose from.

Outdoor recreation at its best, our trips in Patagonia offer accommodation in camping or refugio or top class hotel.



Flying There & Back

When arriving to Patagonia

Cascada Expediciones can easily book your local trips in Chile. We handle many flights for our clients and we can coordinate the best flight departures to match our itineraries in Patagonia and elsewhere in Chile. All tickets issued are electronic tickets, so you can ask for the boarding pass directly at the check-in counter of your airline at any Chilean airport. Please carry your passport with you for all flights, without a passport the airline might not allow you to board the plane. When reserving the ticket with us make sure that the passport given is still valid for the date of your trip and that you are going to travel with the very same passport.



If you prefer to use your own travel agency, please give the following information to your travel agent:

Most of our trips in Patagonia start in Punta Arenas, Puerto Natales or (paying an extra) in El Calafate.

AIRPORT

Our pick up is Punta Arenas' airport at 12:30 PM.

If you are flying the same day your program starts, we ask you to book a flight that arrives to Punta Arenas before 12:30 PM. If this flight is not direct it might have stopovers in Temuco and/or Puerto Montt.

Note: We cannot wait for clients arriving in flights scheduled to land in Punta Arenas after 12:30 PM! If that is your case, you have to ask our reservation department for a private transfer to the park.

PUNTA ARENAS

If you already are in Punta Arenas, let us know where you will be staying and our drivers will pick you up from your hotel (our staff in Puerto Natales will call you the day before to reconfirm pickup time).

For our clients staying in Punta Arenas be aware that after your pick-up, the van will pass to the airport before heading towards Puerto Natales so you might need to stop and wait at the airport waiting for other clients arriving by plane (always before 12:30 PM).

Driving time between Punta Arenas & Puerto Natales is approximately 2,5 -3 hours.

PUERTO NATALES

If you already are in Puerto Natales, let us know where you will be staying and our drivers will pick you up from your hotel (our staff in Puerto Natales will call you the day before to reconfirm pickup time). Please consider our van will be coming from Punta Arenas airport so will be picked up in the afternoon.

Driving time between Puerto Natales & Ecocamp is approximately 2,5 - 3 hours.

EL CALAFATE (ARGENTINA)

If you already are in El Calafate we ask you to take the first morning bus departing from El Calafate to Puerto Natales in order to be on time to catch our regular van towards Torres del Paine. We recommend the bus company Zaahj. Upon your arrival in Puerto Natales please go to our office located in Barros Arana 166.

If you prefer, you can also purchase these services through Cascada and we will be in charge of coordinating these transfers and buses or shuttles (whichever your option chosen) for you.

Driving time between El Calafate & Puerto Natales is approximately 5 hours.

Driving time between Puerto Natales & Ecocamp is approximately 2,5 hours.

When leaving Torres del Paine N.P

Our programs end in Punta Arenas, Puerto Natales or (paying an extra) in El Calafate.

As an exception only our clients taking PAT 030 (4 Day Torres del Paine Passage) end in Puerto Natales, For this cases clients continuing to Punta Arenas can contract a private transfer to Punta Arenas or take the public bus to Punta Arenas airport.

The last day of your trip with us you will leave the park after breakfast.

PUERTO NATALES

It is a 2,5 hours drive to reach Puerto Natales. You will be arriving around noon to this town.

PUNTA ARENAS

It is a 6-7 hours drive to reach Punta Arenas airport so when booking your flight back, we ask you to book a flight that leaves Punta Arenas after 5:00 PM.

The drop-off time in Punta Arenas depends on your and your travel companion's flight schedules. We will make sure that you arrive at the airport 1 hour before your flight's departure, it has to be a flight leaving after 5:00 PM ,as earliest possible drop-off time is 4:00 PM.

When you book these domestic flights on your own please make sure you inform us the correct flight number and schedule together with the flight's record locator. (Amadeus Reservation Number).

CALAFATE

We can also leave you at Cerro Castillo (border between Chile and Argentina) the day your trek ends to catch the first morning bus that goes to Calafate (5 hour drive). Bus tickets must be arranged by us in advance (We STRICTLY recommend it as there are no bus offices in Cerro Castillo and this is the only way we can guarantee you space).



Note: Please consider the following as per our environmental policy:

“Gasoline and diesel waste from passenger transport vehicles: we encourage the use of shared transport on our daily routes and we will not honor passenger requests for private transfers while other passengers are requesting the same route at the same time”

Even if you have paid for a private trip, transport might be shared with other passenger travelling with Cascada Expediciones. The rest of the services will continue private as requested.

Distances between cities

FROM	TO	Kms/Mi	Approx. Time	Others
Punta Arenas	Puerto Natales	254 Kms / 157 mi	3 hrs	Paved
Puerto Natales	Ecocamp	125 Kms / 78 mi	2,5 hrs	Unpaved
Ecocamp	Cerro Castillo	60 Kms / 37 mi	1 hrs	Unpaved
El Calafate	Puerto Natales	362 Kms / 224 mi	5 hrs	Unpaved
El Calafate	Cerro Castillo	296 Kms / 183 mi	4 hrs	Unpaved
El Calafate	Chalten	220 Kms / 136 mi	3 hrs	Unpaved
Cerro Castillo	Cancha Carrera	7 Kms / 4,3 mi	10 min	Unpaved
Santiago	Punta Arenas	2192 Kms / 1359 mi	3-4 hrs	*
El Calafate	Buenos Aires	2787 Kms / 1731 mi	3-5 hrs	*

*Flying distance

Money Matters

ATM machines are available in Punta Arenas, Puerto Natales and Calafate in the proximity of the hotels.



Weather & Climate

Further south, in Patagonia, the weather can be very unpredictable, and can change drastically and unexpectedly. On a sunny day, daytime temperatures can be very pleasant, ranging between 13°C -20°C (low 60s and low 70s F). However, rain, high winds, and cold air can blow in quickly even during the summer months, making the temperatures drop into the -1°C/5°C (30s and 40s F). Snow is a possibility.

You need to be prepared for these changes at all times, as you will most likely experience the area's fickle moods. Rest assured, however, that just as quickly as the weather turns nasty, it can turn balmy, too! Nighttime temperatures will most likely be in the -1°C /5°C (30s and 40s F) depending on the weather.



Preparing Physically for the Trip

(Only applicable to trekking trips - not nature nor wildlife trips)

A trek in Patagonia requires a lot more physical preparation than most vacations.

On *PAT-017*, *PAT-025*, *PAT-026*, *PAT-090* you will be hiking between five to ten hours a day, mostly on steep and rocky terrain.



Although the hikes themselves are not particularly strenuous, their length and challenging terrain will be more taxing than expected. Please keep in mind that the weather in Patagonia can change drastically and unexpectedly, causing the temperatures to drop. These weather conditions can easily affect both the body and the morale. You need to be in excellent health and physical condition to enjoy such an experience.

You should start your moderate training several months before departure, then slowly build up to a more strenuous level. Stop the strenuous activities if you feel dizzy, faint, have difficulty breathing, or experience any other significant medical discomfort.

Here is a recommended program that should get you in good shape. This is only a guideline and can be adapted to your preferences. Consult a physician before commencing any new workout program.

Week 1 through 4: Start moderately and work out a minimum of four days per week. Strike a good balance between aerobic workout and muscle strengthening. Outdoors, you can run, hike, or mountain bike on hilly terrain to best achieve the aerobic fitness component. Indoors at a gym, you can use the Stairmaster and treadmill wearing a backpack with some weight in it to substitute for the outdoor activities. Work on muscle strengthening either by lifting weights or by doing pushups, sit-ups, and squats. Include a long hike at the weekend (there's no better way to train for a trek than to trek!).

Running: 3 to 5 miles is an adequate training run.

Biking: 1- to 2-hour rides. Try to include some hills.

Hiking: 5- to 6-hour hikes. Try to include some hills.

Treadmill or Stairmaster: 50- to 60-minute sessions.

Week 5 and onward until Departure: Increase your workouts to a minimum of five days per week.

Remember that a Patagonia trek can be the trip of a lifetime and you really want to enjoy it, so please take your training program seriously—it'll be worth it!

Medical Matters

It's important that we have medical information on each trip member to use by the leader in the field and to ensure that everyone is qualified for the trip.

The trip leader is responsible for the safety of all trip members and he or she may evacuate or disqualify a trip member in the field if anyone's safety is jeopardized. No refunds are given if a trip member has to leave the trip. Please be aware that hospital facilities for serious medical problems may at times be a long way away, that a doctor may not always be available, and that evacuation can be prolonged, difficult, and expensive.



Remember that Cascada Expediciones is not a medical authority and that we can only give you general information, which may not be accurate by the time you travel. You should confer with your physician. Other good Web sites for travel preparation information are www.tripprep.com and www.medicineplanet.com.

Staying Healthy

While trekking with us: We supply plenty of clean drinking water at our Ecocamp. In addition, the food served to you is safe and prepared hygienically by an experienced camp staff.

At Hotels and on your own: Although the tap water at the hotels is generally drinkable, you can buy bottled water at the local stores.

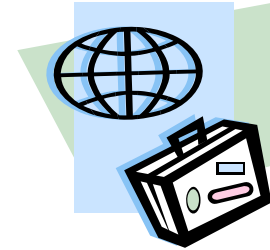
Personal Medical Kit

We bring a basic first aid kit for emergencies, but you must bring your own personal first aid supplies. Please discuss this matter with your physician, as well as medications you should bring with you, such as antibiotics, pain killers, allergy medicine (epi-pens for allergic reactions to bee stings), etc.

Luggage, Clothing & Travel Accessories

Try to go as light as possible and take *only* the essentials. Excess baggage can be a burden to you and to our support personnel. Keep in mind that there are limits on how much your duffel bag/suitcase can weight because of weight restrictions on both international and domestic flights (usually 20 kg/44 lbs. for domestic flights).

While you are trekking in Torres del Paine, your city clothes can be safely stored in at our office in Puerto Natales. You can recover them when returning from your trek at the end of your program. You can also leave them at Ecocamp in case you are not returning to Puerto Natales/Punta Arenas.



Luggage

- Duffel bag. We ask you to bring one duffel bag for your gear with a lock. Make sure your duffel is sturdy and water-resistant. (Applicable only for PAT 017 9 Days TDP Circuit).
- Daypack. It should have a capacity of 20 to 30 liters (1220 to 1830 cubic inches). This daypack is only needed to carry your personal belongings for the day (camera, water, box lunch, sunscreen, etc).
- Spare roll-up duffel. Consider bringing a small, roll-up nylon duffel (lockable) to store your city clothes.

TRAVELER'S

When you fly, always bring in your carry-on bag all irreplaceable items, such as cameras, medications, spare eyeglasses, and important papers.

Porters and luggage storage

PAT-025 7 Days TDP W Trek: On day 1 when you arrive into the Ecocamp, we will give you a small duffel bag where you will have to pack your clothes and personal belongings needed for the next 2 nights out of Ecocamp. We will send that small bag with the porters. Your big duffel bag/suit case will be stored at the Ecocamp until your return on day 4.

Porters will help us on days 3 and 4 to carry part of your personal belongings from Refugio/Cabañita Cuernos to Refugio Lodge Paine Grande and then to the Ecocamp. This way you will only hike with your daypack.

PAT-026 5 Days TDP Short W Trek: Once you arrive at Ecocamp on day 1, we will give you a small duffel bag where you will have to pack your clothes and personal belongings needed for the next night. On day 2, we will send that small bag with the "catamaran" that crosses Lake Pehoe so you will get it once you arrive at Refugio Lodge Paine Grande. On Day 3 our staff will pick the luggage up at Refugio Lodge Paine Grande and return it to the Ecocamp. Your big duffel bag/suit case will be stored at the Ecocamp until your return on day 3.





PAT-017 9 Days TDP Circuit:

On day 1 we will provide you with 2 small duffel bags (15 liters each). In these bags you will have to put 2 changes of clothes and all of your personal belongings needed for this excursion. No extra bag will be needed for this excursion, except these duffel bags and your daypack when walking.

We use porters/packhorses on day 2 (Ecocamp to Camp Dickson) and day 3 (Camp Dickson to Camp Los Perros) to take all of our clients' bags, food, as well as the common camping equipment. Those days, you will only hike with your daypack. You are allowed to send up to 7,5 kgs (15 lbs) on your duffel bags with the horses/porters those days.

On the evening of day 3 all of our client's dirty clothes will be sent back to Ecocamp with our porters in one of these 15 liters duffel bags given the first day.

On day 4 (Los Perros to Camp Grey), you will only walk with your daypack. Due to the difficulty/conditions of the trail no porters/packhorses will be used this day.

In the evening, when arriving to Camp Grey your second duffel bag (prepared and packed on day 2) will be waiting for you with new and clean clothes.

Day 5 (Camp Grey to Camp Paine Grande), day 6 (Camp Paine Grande to Camp Cuernos) and day 7 (Camp Cuernos to Ecocamp) porters/packhorses will be used again and your duffel bag will be with you until your return to Ecocamp on the evening of day 7.

Clothing

Trekking in Patagonia requires you to bring comfortable and adequate clothing to protect you from cold (and possibly wet) weather. We recommend to layer with synthetic clothing (such as polypropylene, capilene, or pile) as synthetic fabrics are the most effective barriers against the cold. They provide the best insulation, they are light in weight, wick away perspiration, and dry quickly if wet. Wool and wool/synthetic blends are also suitable. We discourage the use of cotton garments in cold or wet mountain conditions.

When layering, the innermost layer should be long underwear. The middle layer can be a synthetic turtleneck or wool shirt, and pants. The outermost layer should be a synthetic or down jacket, and/or a good quality Gore-Tex wind/rain parka and over-pants.

We have not included quantities for each item listed. Use your own judgment, based on the length of your trip and overall packing/weight restrictions for your luggage.

Underwear

- Regular underwear. Synthetics are easier to wash and dry.
- Synthetic thermal underwear. You need a lightweight long underwear top and bottom of a polyester-type fabric. Wool and wool/synthetic blends are also suitable.

Shirts

- Long-sleeved, synthetic or wool shirt.
- Short-sleeved synthetic or cotton/synthetic T-shirts.

Sweater/Jacket

- Medium-weight sweater or jacket of synthetic fabric, such as fleece.
- Medium-weight down or synthetic-fill jacket (10-12 oz. of down or 15-20 oz. of fiberfill).

Trousers

- Full-length pants, preferably of quick-drying synthetic fabric.
- Hiking shorts, preferably of quick-drying synthetic fabric.
- Pile/fleece pants, ideal for around camp.

Headwear

- Sun hat with wide brim, preferably with a chinstrap to keep it from blowing off.
- Bandanna. It will keep your neck from getting sunburned and can double as a hand towel.
- Wool or pile hat or ski cap.

Foul Weather Gear

- Gore-Tex rain/wind parka (must fit over bulky clothing).
- (optional) Sturdy poncho to protect daypack and camera gear from rain.
- Gore-Tex rain/wind pants, preferably with full-length side zipper (must fit over your other pants).

Hands

- Gloves or mitts (wool or pile).
- Waterproofed shell gloves or mitts.

Socks

- Medium weight synthetic socks (we recommend Thorlo® Lt. Trekking).
- Athletic socks (synthetic for easy washing and drying) that are suitable for the shoes you'll be wearing while in towns.
- Inner socks (synthetic) that can be washed and dried quickly.

Footwear

This is where the rubber meets the road - take care in your choice. Sturdy, properly fitting footwear can make your trip much more pleasurable. If you're buying new boots for this trip, please break them in advance by wearing them as often as possible before the trip.

- Medium-weight, all leather, sturdy hiking boots with padded ankle, good arch support, and a lug sole traction. Your hiking boots should be waterproofed, well broken in, and suitable for prolonged walking on rocky terrain and possibly snow. Running shoes or Nike hiking shoes are NOT appropriate for this trip.
- Tennis shoes or Teva-type sandals to wear in camp (optional). Sandals are also suggested for PAT017 9 Days TDP Circuit if we need to cross creeks.
- Comfortable walking shoes to wear while in towns.
- Gaitors: very useful for PAT017 9 Days TDP Circuit. Also suggested for our other treks



Sleeping gear (only for PAT-017 9 Days TDP Circuit)

- Light or medium-weight sleeping bag (synthetic recommended with temperature rating of – 15°C/5°F).
- Full or 3/4 length Therm-a-Rest sleeping pad.

Other Items

- Swimsuit (you never know...).
- One set of casual city clothes that are dressier than your trek clothes (for the cities).
- Hiking sticks (optional but highly recommended). These are helpful, if not essential, to relieve the impact on your knees during long downhills. Some people use them on uphills as well; however, it is not recommended to make an habitual use out of them (it could compromise the natural balance of your legs and ankles). We recommend to practice with one, or two, before the hike. This is only a recommendation and not for everybody.

Travel Accessories

- Wide mouth water bottles, 1-liter capacity. Bring two and make sure they are leak-proof, heavy-duty plastic (preferably Nalgene brand). Lightweight plastic bottles, such as Evian-type bottles and the kind used by bicyclists, aren't recommended—they leak and break.
- Toiletry kit—soap, toothbrush, and so on.
- Moisturizing lotion. The air in Patagonia is very dry.
- Insect repellent.
- Ace bandage or brace if you're prone to sore knees or ankles.
- Sunglasses.
- Spare pair of prescription glasses, prescription sunglasses, or contact lenses. (Attention contact lens wearers: parts of Patagonia are very dusty—plan to wear glasses some of the time.)
- Sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher. The sun in Patagonia is much more intense than you probably imagine.
- Sunscreen lipstick of SPF 15 or higher.
- Small flashlight with spare batteries, or small headlamp with spare batteries.
- Small padlocks or combination locks for your duffels.
- Plastic bags of various sizes for keeping things sorted out in your duffel. Zip-lock bags work well. (They're also great for camera gear.)
- Nylon stuff sacks to stash your bulky gear into.
- Heavyweight plastic garbage bag to use as a waterproofing liner inside your daypack, internal-frame backpack, or duffel.
- Towel and washcloth. The campsites we use have hot water showers.
- Personal first aid kit.
- Swiss Army-type pocket knife with can opener and scissors.

Optional Travel Accessories

- Camera and plenty of film or –if digital- plenty of memory!.
- Binoculars.
- Watch.
- Repair kit with needle, thread, and safety pins.
- Reading and writing material.
- Spanish/English dictionary.



- Your favorite snack food. We'll have plenty of excellent food, but you might want to bring along your favorite snack food (such as raisins or chocolate). Although we accommodate vegetarians, and we'll be served fresh fruits and vegetables, meat is one of Chile's and Argentina's main staples. Vegetarians might want to bring some protein supplements.

Photo & Video Gear

Although Patagonia offers unmatched photo opportunities, the weather changes very quickly and the sky is often overcast. The light quality and conditions constantly change, requiring a wide range of film speeds.

Bringing the right camera and film will determine the quality of your photographs of the trip. A good SLR camera with telephoto lens is ideal. Lenses longer than 300mm will require a tripod for good results and may be too cumbersome to lug around.

Bring a mixture of fast and slower film. Long lenses require faster film, so consider 200 ISO (ASA) for a larger lens in low-light conditions, and use slower 64 ISO (ASA) film for superior color slides. One disadvantage of low ISO (ASA) film is that you may need a tripod or beanbag to steady the camera during early morning and evening shots. Many people like to bring small point-and-shoot cameras for their lighter weight and size.

There is electricity at the main dome at Ecocamp. There you will be able to charge your camera batteries (220 v).

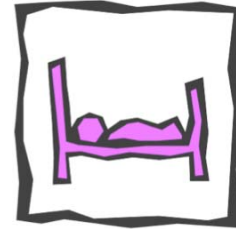
TRAVELER'S TIP

Bring lots more film (or memory if you use a digital camera) than you think you'll need. You won't be able to buy more on trek, and it may be very expensive in the towns you'll visit. And don't forget spare camera batteries.

While you're on the trip

Accommodations

- Ecocamp Torres: you will sleep in comfortable 12 ft diameter domes with 2 or 3 beds in each. There is a very cozy 30 ft dome that hosts the kitchen/living/dining areas and a shared bathroom with hot shower and composting toilets.
- Refugio Lodge Paine Grande*: the new Refugio Lodge Paine Grande, opened in 2004. It has comfortable 6 person bedrooms, large and clean shared bathrooms –hot shower of course-, a very large dining area and several get together areas... and even an Internet cafe! (PAT 026 & PAT 025)
- Refugio Los Cuernos*: we stay at cozy and warm double cabins and the refugio has a large dining area and clean bathrooms with hot shower. (PAT 025)
- Camping while hiking the 9 Days TDP circuit (PAT-017): While camping, two people will share a very roomy three-person tent. On the first day of camping, your guides will give a demonstration of how to pitch and take down your tent. After that you will need to do it yourself. Not all the campsites have hot showers.



**Note:*

If you book a trip less than 40 days before departure, depending on availability, overnights might be camping during the nights usually you should spent in refugios (night 2 & 3 for PAT 025 & night 2 for PAT 026). When refuges are not available, then we set up a very cozy tent for you with sleeping bag, inflatable mattress and a Polar Fleece liner. All meals will be inside the refuge, and the bathrooms will be the ones of the camping.

In Refugios Los Cuernos (PAT 025), overnight might be also in the 6-bed dormitory rooms in case the cabins are not available.

Laundry

Laundry service is not available at the camps...but you'll be able to do some hand laundry there.

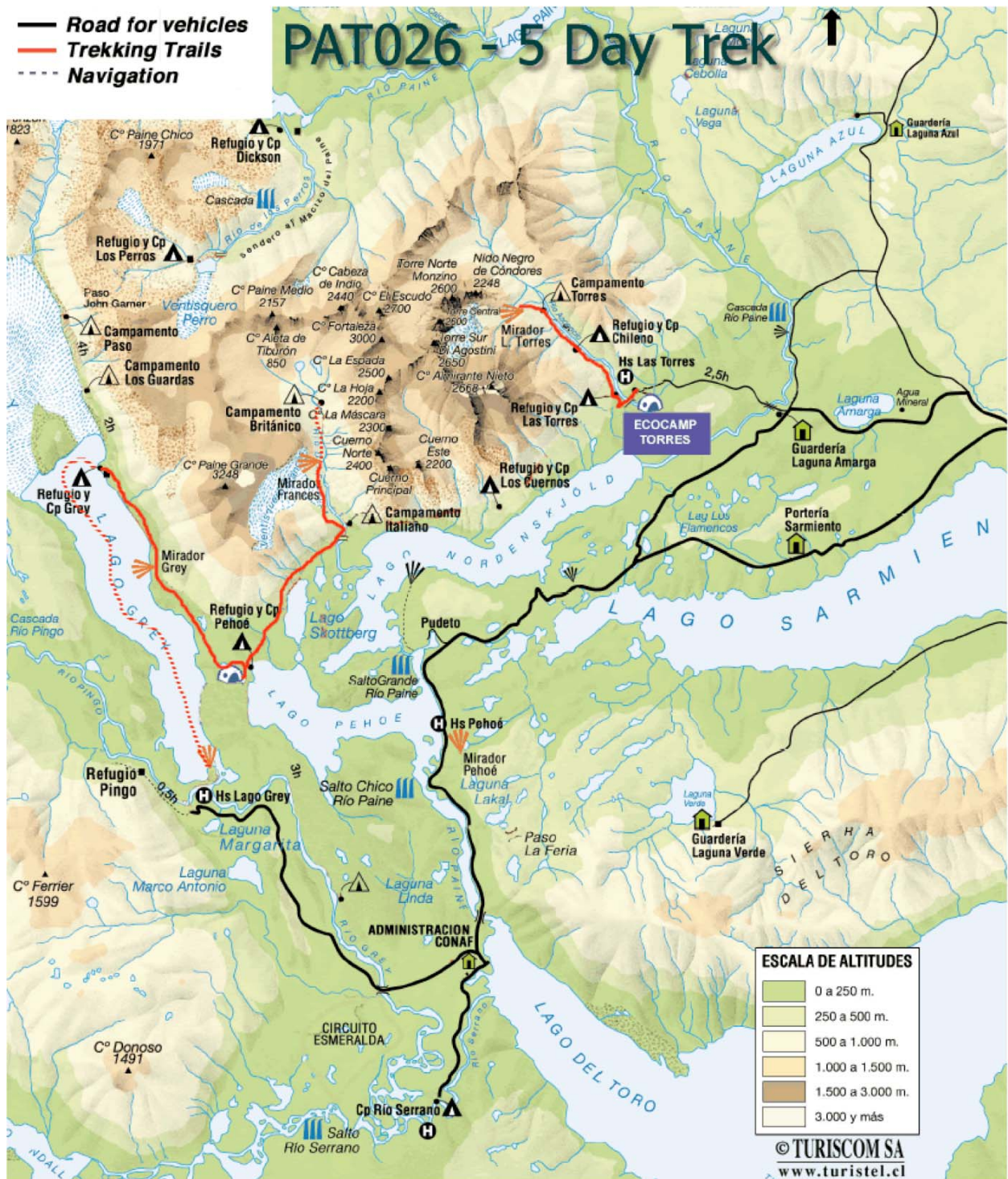
Communications

Fax machines, telephones and Internet access are available at Punta Arenas and Puerto Natales. In Torres del Paine you will find a satellite public telephone at the mountain hut close to the Ecocamp.



PAT 026 - 5 Days Short W Trek

- Road for vehicles
- Trekking Trails
- Navigation



PAT 017 – 9 Days Torres del Paine Circuit

