

SOUTH AMERICA

Road Trip

Full expedition (39 days)

Iquique to Ushuaia

08 Nov - 16 Dec 2026

07 Nov - 15 Dec 2027

Approx. 9,000 km

Patagonia only (21 days)

Pucon to Ushuaia

26 Nov - 16 Dec 2026

25 Nov - 15 Dec 2027

Approx. 5,000 km



Self Drive
ADVENTURES
GUIDED TAGALONG TOURS

www.selfdriveadventures.com

The Route

Choose your own adventure: The 21-day Patagonia plunge or the full-blown 39-day epic road trip from northern Chile. Either way, you'll explore some of South America's most breathtaking landscapes and remote roads, including Argentina's Ruta 40 and Chile's Carretera Austral (Ruta 7). Enjoy cosy 3-star accommodations, with a stay or two at charming "Estancias." Both adventures reach Ushuaia, famously known as "the end of the world" – the southernmost city on the planet.

You'll be cruising in a 4x4, but don't worry, no off-road driving skills are needed. The rugged gravel paths demand a sturdy vehicle, making the 4x4 essential for this once-in-a-lifetime journey. Pack your sense of adventure and get ready for an unforgettable road trip!

Highlights include

- Coastal desert of Northern Chile
- Atacama Desert
- Remote painted deserts and towns of Northern Argentina
- Intense blue lagoons in the Lake's District,
- Snow capped Andean mountains
- Vineyards of the Uco Valley in Mendoza
- Overnight stays on estancias and farms
- Glaciers
- Ancient rock art
- Animals and birds of the region and more...



Please Note: Itinerary subject to change dependent on accommodation availability and the support team decides on final route as per current conditions on day of travel.



Itinerary

D1: Iquique, Chile

Arrive in the seaside town of Iquique in the north of Chile. Here the dunes of the Atacama Desert roll down to the ocean. Transfer to your accommodation. Our hotel is on the beach and you can refresh yourself from your flight with a dip in Pacific Ocean or walk down the main boulevard. Evening briefing and welcome dinner. D included

D2: Iquique, Chile

After breakfast we collect our 4x4s. We will then take a drive into the Atacama to the ghost town of Humberstone, a UNESCO world heritage site, before returning to our hotel. B included, (approx. 120km drive round trip)

D3: San Pedro the Atacama, Chile

Via the ocean road, we head up into the mountains to the small relaxed village of San Pedro the Atacama. This village is made of clay and 80% is "car free". B included, (approx. 510km)

D4: San Pedro the Atacama, Chile

San Pedro the Atacama. There is so much to see here, we have allowed two days for optional activities like visiting the Valle de la Luna (moon valley) or salt flats with flamingos. B included

D5: San Pedro the Atacama, Chile

San Pedro the Atacama. Day to explore the area. B included

D6: San Antonio de los Cobres, Argentina

From here it's up to the border with Argentina, in the middle of nowhere. We will pass the Licancabur volcano that is 5,920m high on the way to the border. Then we join the famous "Ruta 40" to San Antonio de los Cobres a small town (population 5,500) at 3,775 m making it one of the highest elevation towns in Argentina. B included, (approx. 415km)

D7: Angastaco, Argentina

From San Antonio de los Cobres we start our climb to the highest pass of the tour, the Abra del Acay or "Acay Pass" (4,890m). This pass is the highest pass in the world on a national highway. It's an interesting "highway" being a narrow gravel road at the pass. After this we descend to the town of Cachi and onto the small town of Angastaco. Angastaco is a beauty, with spectacular views of the area. Lonely Planet describes it as "an oasis with vineyards, fields of anise and cumin, and the ruins of an ancient pucará (walled city)". B included, (approx. 230km)



D8: Tafi del Valle, Argentina

Today a total change of scenery from desert to the green mountains of Tafi del Valle. You may be forgiven for thinking you had arrived in the country of Wales – a stark contrast after the dry and sparse desert scenery. B included, (approx. 210km)

D9: Catamarca, Argentina

We drive next into the La Rioja Province and today we have a lot of changes in scenery with dramatic landscapes including cactus-studded sierras in the east and stark Andean highlands in the northwest. Tonight we will stay in the village of Catamarca. B included, (approx. 280km)

D10: El Chiflon, Argentina

We will drive to Baldecitos in the Parque Provincial Ischigualasto with its painted desert. Here we will do a 40 km loop of 5 different "stations" or sights in the park. We have a small back track to our hotel in El Chiflon. B included, (approx. 300km)

D11: San Jose de Jachal, Argentina

Today we travel on remote roads to San Jose de Jachal on the Jachal river. B included, (approx. 160km)

D12: Barreal, Argentina

We drive through one of the most charming valleys in Argentina and to the town of Barreal, sheltered by the poplars and the murmuring waters in the irrigation ditches. B included, (approx. 250km)

D13: Uco Valley, Argentina

Into the famous wine and olive country of the region of Mendoza where we will spend two nights in the Uco Valley, one of the three wine areas of the Mendoza area. The Uco Valley is the Mecca for lovers of wine. The region is world-famous for its Malbec. B & D included, (approx. 260km)

D14: Uco Valley, Argentina

Here you can taste some of Argentina's best high-altitude wines. So yes, we have a rest day to explore the region and take an optional winery tour. B & D included

D15: Malargüe, Argentina

Ruta 40 is Argentina's equivalent to the USA's Route 66. We'll be on Ruta 40's paved and unpaved roads throughout the next week. We also travel along the eastern side of the Andes for the next few days. Today's destination is Malargüe, a small town at the foothills of these impressive mountains. B included, (approx. 260km)



D16: Chos Malal, Argentina

Today we will arrive in the pretty oasis town of Chos Malal. It was named by the Mapuche (the indigenous inhabitants of this region) for the yellow rock in the surrounding hills. B included, (approx. 360km)

D17: Villa Pehuenia, Argentina

We will take a detour from our southern route on Ruta 40 and drive through the prehistoric Araucaria trees to Villa Pehuenia on the shore of Aluminé Lake. We are now heading into the famous "Lakes District" of Argentina and Chile with its 7 lakes. This area is beautiful. B included, (approx. 315km)

D18: Villa Pehuenia

A stunning place for a rest day. B included

Patagonia Only Adventure Starts Here**D19/D1: Pucon, Chile**

We cross the border back into Chile to Pucon. We will meet the rest of our group in Temuco if there are some joining for the Patagonia section of the adventure. We will need to swap vehicles here too. We will have another "welcome dinner" here to welcome any newcomers. B & D included, (approx. 180km)

D20/D2: Pucon, Chile

After picking up our new 4x4s for those joining here, we will take a day drive to see the Villarica volcano. B included, (approx. 50km round trip)

D21/D3: San Martin de los Andes, Argentina

Back across the border to Argentina passing through Junin de los Andes and then continuing through the Lake's District to arrive at San Martin de los Andes on the shores of Lake Lácar. B included, (approx. 200km)

D22/D4: Bariloche, Argentina

Off to "Chocolate town", Bariloche. In winter this is the heart of the ski region of Argentina and has chocolate stores galore. Lucky for our waistlines we only have one night here. B included, (approx. 210km)

D23/D5: Esquel, Argentina

Today we drive through Los Alerces National Park. Its western boundary is the Chilean border. Successive glaciations have molded the landscape in the region creating spectacular features such as moraines, glacial cirques and clear-water lakes. We now begin to traverse the area known the world over as Patagonia. Patagonia has long been an adventure traveller's paradise and you won't be disappointed. You'll notice the change in scenery as the landscape opens to the massive pampas. Be on the lookout for the traditional Gauchos. We will stay tonight in Esquel. B included, (approx. 310km)



D24/D6: Puyuhuapi region, Chile

A stunning drive today. We'll be crossing into Chile and going through the world-famous town of Futaleufu – a mecca for kayaking, rafting and fly fishing. The road will be a mixture of tarmac and dirt and the scenery is spectacular. Our destination will be in or near the picturesque little fishing village of Puyuhuapi.

B included, (approx. 285km)

D25/D7: Coyhaique, Chile

We'll enjoy one of the most famous adventure travel roads in the world today – the Camino Austral. Camino Austral is one of the most beautiful roads you will ever drive. Still a gravel road, it winds its way through spectacular scenery, beside beautiful coloured rivers, hanging glaciers and through ancient forests. This part of Chile is very remote and all the better for it. The town of Coyhaique is known as the gateway to remote Patagonia. The rocky Cerro McKay looms over the city. B included, (approx. 245km)

D26/D8: Puerto Guadal, Chile

Lonely Planet describes our destination today as: "Windy but damn-postcard-beautiful, Puerto Guadal is located at the southwest end of Lago General Carrera on the road to Chile Chico, 13 km east of the Carretera Austral. The village appears to hold siesta at all hours, but cool accommodations, nearby fossil hikes and glaciers can keep a visitor very entertained." B & D included, (approx. 285km)

D27/D9: Puerto Guadal, Chile

Rest day in our lovely hotel on the lake. You may wish to visit the interesting and stunning marble caves here or just enjoy the view of the lake and read a book. B & D included

D28/D10: Lago Posadas, Argentina

Back into Argentina via the "Paso Roballos" known as one of the world's most spectacular roads and back onto Ruta 40 to our destination of Lago Posadas on the southern edge of the Andes. B & D included, (approx. 210km)

D29/D11: Santa Thelma, Argentina

We'll pay a visit to the "Cueva de los Manos" – these are famous caves with paintings of hands which date from 13,000 to 9,000 years ago. All dirt today and through the real Patagonia. Wide open spaces, huge landscapes. A delicious treat in store for us tonight as we'll be staying on a genuine, working Argentinian Estancia (working farm), Santa Thelma. We'll enjoy our dinner in the barn with red wine (at own cost). B & D included, (approx. 415km)



D30/D12: El Calafate, Argentina

Today we drive long flat sections of Patagonia on Ruta 40 to El Calafate the jumping off point for the Perito Moreno glacier. "Glaciares National Park" has the largest icefields on earth.

B included, (approx. 400km)

D31/D13: El Calafate, Argentina

Out and back drive to the Perito Moreno glacier, a UNESCO World Heritage site and true wonder. Lonely Planet describes it, "Among Earth's most dynamic and accessible ice fields". Glacier Perito Moreno is truly breathtaking. Hearing the noise that the huge chunks of ice make as they shear off from the glacier and watching the bow wave create wash into shore is an experience not to be missed. B included, (approx. 165km round trip)

D32/D14: Puerto Natales, Chile

Crossing the border back to Chile and onto the port town of Puerto Natales. Another iconic and spectacular National Park awaits us: "Torres del Paine". B included, (approx. 275km)

D33/D15: Puerto Natales, Chile

Full day inside the park and returning to Puerto Natales. B included, (approx. 250km).

D34/D16: Porvenir, Chile

On our way to Tierra del Fuego. We leave windy Patagonia behind when we cross the Strait of Magellan by ferry to Porvenir for the night. B & D included, (approx. 450km)

D35/D17: Ushuaia, Argentina

Today we reach the southernmost city in the world, Ushuaia. We will visit a King Penguin Colony on the way. B included, (approx. 475km)

D36/D18: Ushuaia, Argentina

Our rest day can be spent visiting "The End of the World" park, or a boat trip to see penguins on the Beagle Canal. B included

D37/D19: Cerro Sombrero, Chile

Time to head north and we'll spend the night in Cerro Sombrero. B & D included, (approx. 460km)

D38/D20: Punta Arenas, Chile

Although there is a ferry to Punta Arenas from Porvenir it is only once a week and can be unreliable so we will head back to the same ferry crossing point and then retrace our steps back to our final town for this epic adventure, Punta Arenas. We will drop off our cars and spend our last night here. B & Farewell dinner included, (approx. 310km)

D39/21: Depart

Depart from Punta Arenas airport. B included





Dates...

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Prices, Dates...

Prices...

2 people per 4x4

USD19,450*per person 39 day full tour, double/twin share

USD12,750*per person 21 day Patagonia only tour, double/twin share

Prices for a 3rd or 4th person sharing available on request

*The prices above are based on the 2026 prices and are based on 2 people per 4x4 on a double/twin share basis. 2027 prices to be confirmed. There will be a maximum of 5 vehicles (plus support vehicle). Prices are subject to exchange rate fluctuations – please see booking form for all terms and conditions.

Please do not book flights nor pay for travel insurance until you have been advised that we have received deposits from the minimum number of participants for this adventure.

Flights need to be arranged to arrive in Iquique, Chile on day 1 for the 39 day tour or Pucon, Chile on day 1 for the 21 day tour in time for the 5 pm group briefing. You can fly out anytime on day 21/39 from Punta Arenas. We can assist with booking additional nights of pre and post tour accommodation.

Inclusions...

Arrival and departure transfers, vehicle hire (manual 4x4 – Nissan Navara, Toyota Hilux, Ford Ranger, Mazda BT50 or similar – the rental fleet changes often), vehicle insurance (standard), compulsory insurance for Chile and Argentina (for personal accidents the people in the car and 3rd persons involved in the accident – valid 45 days), 1 GPS per vehicle, hand held two-way radio in vehicle, border crossing documentation, border crossing authorisation for 2 people per vehicle, accommodation (twin/double), meals as per itinerary (all breakfasts and 10 dinners on 39 day tour, 8 dinners on 21 day tour), 2 boat crossings of Strait of Magellan, support vehicle, Self Drive Adventures escort and local English and Spanish speaking guide.

Exclusions...

Airfares return to South America, fuel (approx. USD1,500 per car on 39 day trip, USD1,000 per car for 21 day trip), vehicle excess (excess is approx. USD1,200 – this cannot be reduced by paying an additional daily amount – paid in Chilean Pesos), road tolls (approx. USD10 per car), food other than listed in itinerary (approx. budget USD1,200 for 39 day tour and USD700 for 21 day tour per person excluding drinks), entrance fees to monuments and national parks (approx. USD135 per person), border crossing authorisation for 3rd or 4th person per vehicle (approx. USD100 per person), any pre-post tour accommodation requested, ferry from Porvenir to Punta Arenas (this is only scheduled 1 day per week so we most likely will drive this section of the tour), local tips (approx. USD300), travel insurance (medical evacuation insurance highly recommended), visas (if required), vaccinations (if required), any other items of a personal nature and local tips. Car excess and car rental terms and conditions will be supplied separately.

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Other Information

This section provides you with important information about travelling in South America prior to booking this adventure. As always, if you have any other questions about joining this tour, please don't hesitate to contact our knowledgeable team. If you'd like to speak with another traveller about this adventure, we can put you in touch with other guests that have travelled this route (or a similar one).

Mindset...

The mindset required on this adventure is one of patience and flexibility and don't expect a luxury holiday. You need to understand that travelling some parts of South America does not always go smoothly, no matter how well planned. Things may not happen as quickly as you'd like but it's all part of the adventure and your Self Drive Adventure's escort will do their utmost to smooth out any hiccups during the journey.

Accommodation...

This is not a 5-star holiday. It is an adventure. We are staying in 3-star accommodation and "best available" along the route. There is one night in an Estancia where some of the group must stay in permanently erected tents with beds and share a bathroom.

Vehicles & Convoy Size...

The vehicle will be a manual 4x4 – Nissan Navara, Toyota Hilux, Ford Ranger, Mazda BT50 or similar – the rental supply conditions in South America often changes. The minimum number of 4x4s in our convoy is 5 and the maximum is 7. This excludes support vehicles. Most vehicles tend to have just two guests, however, up to four can be accommodated. The convoy does travel together for the vast majority of the journey, so you need to be willing to be flexible to fit in with the determined start time each day, stops for breaks etc. There are some days when you can be on your own too. We try to allow breaks for photos, toilet stops, sightseeing, lunch, morning and afternoon tea but road conditions and travel time for the day may affect how long or how many of these we may have.

Support Team...

On this adventure you will be joined by a Self Drive Adventures English speaking escort as well as a local guide who speaks English and Spanish. The decision of the Self Drive Adventure's escort is final on all matters likely to affect the safety or well-being of any person participating in the trip.

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Activity Level...

We do recommend a good level of fitness to endure some of the rough and long days of driving. This trip is not otherwise physically demanding as any walking required is usually a short distance. Some of the activities may involve stairs and uneven terrain but these are optional.

Driving Ability & Conditions...

Even though you'll be cruising in a 4x4, no off-road driving skills are needed. The rugged gravel paths demand a sturdy vehicle, making the 4x4 essential for this once-in-a-lifetime journey. You drive on the right-hand side of the road (left hand drive 4x4). In and around towns the traffic will be busy, but once out of town the roads are not generally busy. We will drive on tar roads, dirt roads, very rough gravel roads. There could be some water crossings. Expect dust, sand and rough conditions to be normal on this adventure. There are some long days when we need to get between destinations.

Food & Drinks...

See the itinerary inclusions for meals that are included. In general, the food is excellent in quality and variety. Breakfast will be included in the accommodation each morning. Lunch will sometimes be in restaurants or a "picnic lunch" on the road. Dinners will be in hotel and other restaurants in the towns we visit. Only breakfast and a welcome and farewell dinner are included.

Weather...

This is summer in South America – but as we are travelling over 9,000km—it will range from cool to cold at night, 40-50F / 5-10C and from 70-95F / 20-35C during the day depending on the location. Rain and wind are more than likely to be encountered, especially the further south we head. If you join us for the full adventure imagine "from bikini to beanie" weather as we head from North to the South.

Flights...

Before booking flights and other arrangements it is your responsibility to confirm with us that we have the minimum number of cars required for this adventure to depart.

Risks & Health...

By participating you acknowledge that the nature of the trip is adventurous, and participation involves a degree of personal risk. Health facilities in South America may not be on par with what would be expected in western countries. We will be very remote and at least a day's drive from the closest town on many occasions. Health risks such as altitude sickness, Hepatitis A&B, Yellow Fever, Rabies, Typhoid Fever, Dengue Fever, Diphtheria and other health risks affect this region. You should discuss the risks with your doctor before agreeing to join this trip.

