

**HEADLINES:**

Laguna de Los Tres in Mount Fitz Roy proves to be a haven for hikers  
Laguna de Los Tres: iconic trail under the peak of Mount Fitz Roy

**TEASER:**

If you're up for the challenge, the hike up this distinctive Patagonian route will test your endurance but reward you with awe-inspiring views.

The iconic Laguna de Los Tres hike to the base of the fearsome walls of Mount Fitz Roy rewards adventurers with one of the most scenic and breathtaking views in all of Patagonia.

The demanding multi-day trek is home to Argentina's spectacular Los Glaciares National Park in the southwestern province of Santa Cruz on the Chilean border.

A beautiful turquoise lagoon surrounded by granite towers of the southern Andes, dominated by Mount Fitz Roy, is the closest point a hiker can reach to gaze in awe at one of the world's toughest mountains to climb.

**Not for the faint of heart**

Ice and fierce winds lash the steep slopes of Mount Fitz Roy even in fine weather, presenting a formidable obstacle to climbers vying to scale the 3,405 metre-high peak of what ancient Tehuelche hunters called Chaltén, or Smoky Mountain, due to the ever-present clouds surrounding it.

In 1877, an expedition led by an Argentinian explorer and scientist Francisco P. Moreno named the distinctive mountain Fitz Roy after Robert FitzRoy, captain of HMS Beagle who explored channels in Tierra del Fuego during Charles Darwin's famous voyage in 1831 to 1836.

Mount Fitz Roy's forbidding summit was first scaled in 1952 by a French expedition of Lionel Terray and Guido Magnone, who picked the southeastern side of the mountain for their attempt.

At least 15 major routes have been put up on the unmistakable peak since the groundbreaking ascent. Still, many climbers wait weeks for the notoriously fickle Patagonian weather to provide a long enough window to attempt an ascent.

**Hiking Los Tres**

The Laguna de Los Tres hike is a 24-kilometre (km), or roughly nine-hour, route from the small village of El Chaltén, a popular gateway to the park, where you can rest in cosy wooden cabins with spectacular mountain views and fill up on supplies before hitting the trail.

Los Tres has three distinct peaks visible from the lagoon's rocky shores: Fitz Roy, Poincenot (3,002 metres), and Saint-Exupéry (2,558 metres).

Starting from El Chaltén, the most popular way to complete the Laguna de Los Tres hike is a two-day return route with one night camping under the starry sky, which gives you a chance to catch a glimpse of the magical sunrise over Mount Fitz Roy, painting its walls in warm tones.

Add another day or two, and you can extend the loop to 40 km to also see a picturesque glacial lake, Laguna Torre, under a granite spire of Cerro Torre, another tough nut to crack for mountaineers exploring Argentina's southern icecap.

A diversion to the spectacular Piedras Blancas Glacier, with its pristine deep blue ice flowing down a narrow valley to a turquoise lagoon below – an extra 4 km that's definitely worth the effort.

During the first hour or so on the Laguna de Los Tres hike, the trail climbs steeply to a viewpoint of the valley of the De las Vueltas river before continuing up along the Del Salto stream towards the distant Mount Fitz Roy.

Reaching the Poincenot base camp – the most popular camping spot in the whole national park after some four hours from El Chaltén – is a great opportunity to get rested over night before a long, gruelling ascent to the lagoon next morning.

### **Points to remember**

Do not expect any luxury beyond a dry latrine at this natural campsite but scores of bent trees provide a partial shelter from strong winds pounding the valley. Plenty of rocks around may also help weigh your tent down and keep it from flying away.

Water around the Fitz Roy area is generally safe to drink, but treating it with purifying tablets or at least boiling it will keep you on the safe side.

From the campsite, the path climbs steeply over some 430 m of elevation, which takes more than an hour or so on the zig-zagging narrow path with loose scree.

Then suddenly after what feels like a never ending ascent, the highly anticipated view opens up just before your eyes with the pristine lagoon, mighty glaciers and three towering peaks above.

The trail finishes at the ridge of the old frontal moraine of the De los Tres Glacier, which has left the lagoon there after retreating. Plan reaching at sunrise when first rays of the sun soften the mighty mountain.

Beware of a sudden gust of wind when approaching the lagoon even on a sunny day, which may force you to finish the last few metres crawling on your knees.

Going down the moraine, and around the lagoon, you will find a path heading towards another breathtaking viewpoint - the barren greenish-blue Laguna Sucia with its hanging glaciers.

Although the access to this viewpoint is possible all year round, from April to October it will depend on how much snow covers the trail, especially in its final stretch.

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