

SAT4 Cerro Castillo Backpacking in Patagonia

Safety Briefing

In order to maximize any adventure in the mountains, it is important to keep safety as a top priority. Even the simplest mishaps, like an innocent stumble that causes a sprained ankle, can happen to anybody and will severely disrupt the experience. As this is a self-guided tour, there won't be anybody along the way mitigating all the possible risks for you. **It will be your responsibility before the tour, and throughout the duration of the tour, to make decisions that keep you safe.**

The purpose of this Safety Briefing is to inform you of the known risks for your tour and the actions you can take to mitigate that risk. This information is largely reliant on the statistics of various Search and Rescue organizations, as well as based on our own analysis of your route. As travel and outdoor



adventure are both known to be full of surprises, this list is far from comprehensive. There are a multitude of things that can go wrong during your tour. Many of these may cause disruptions to your itinerary. But hey, it wouldn't be an adventure if everything was guaranteed to go exactly as planned.

By booking a tour with Alpenventures GmbH, you acknowledge and accept all risks, both listed and not listed, and agree to release Alpenventures GmbH from any liability.

Here is a list of the known risks for mountain hiking in the Alps, and we'll include any specific dangers related to your tour at the end of this document. It's helpful to know that most accidents happen while descending and most happen in clear weather conditions and in mellow terrain. In other words, accidents are more likely to happen when we least expect them.

General Risks for Mountain Hiking	
Risk	Mitigation
Tripping or stumbling	It may not surprise you to know that the most common accident in mountain hiking is tripping or stumbling¹ . It may; however, surprise you to know that 70% of those accidents happen to hikers who report having defective vision . This tells us, that having your vision checked, and ensuring you have a solution for glasses and/or contacts in place that is suitable for hiking in various weather conditions and at various levels of exertion, may greatly reduce your chances of evacuation. Along with this, it is important to start early enough in the day, so you don't find yourself hiking without daylight. It has also been determined that of those who trip or stumble, those who are already very active, are less likely to sustain an injury.
Cardiovascular failure or other existing major medical conditions	The second most common cause for Search and Rescue operations for mountain hiking is cardiovascular failure or other major existing health problems that the hiker already has. For this reason, we strongly recommend all tour participants, who are 40 and older, visit their General Practitioner for a health check-up prior to their tour. We also want to emphasize that travel may not be the most appropriate time for pushing your own limits. We urge all our customers to make conservative decisions when choosing their tour, as well as when they are out on the trail.
Delayed access to rescue and medical assistance	By nature, trekking tours travel through remote areas, and help may not be immediately available should there be a medical emergency. Search and Rescue operations are often run by volunteers and can take hours to reach you, sometimes longer if there is a storm, if it is dark, or if there are other conditions that are unsafe for the teams. It may be up to 24 hours or more before reaching medical assistance should an accident occur. It is important to have basic first aid skills (we recommend taking a Wilderness First Aid Course), to have first aid equipment with you, and to have the equipment with you that would be needed to survive a night outside if necessary (emergency shelter, insulation, food, water) . Alpenventures UNGUIDED does not provide rescue assistance as part of our tour packages. Customers use the local search and rescue infrastructure and should have insurance to cover

	both medical evacuations and medical service in the destination country.
Getting lost	The trails in Cerro Castillo are more rugged than you might find in other areas of Patagonia, such as in Torres del Paine National Park. Getting lost is a risk. Bring a paper map and know how to read it. Take care at all junctions to verify your position. Keep your electronics that are used for navigation functioning with enough battery life throughout your tour ² . If you think you may have taken a wrong turn, stop immediately to assess the situation, and return to the last known position before continuing.
Blindly following navigation instructions	While we certainly emphasize using our navigation app or a GPS device, there is also a danger in getting too focused on these resources. Rockslides, snow fields, landslides and other conditions can deem a route impassable. It is important to be observant during your tour, to constantly assess conditions, and to use your paper map to find a safer route should any dangerous conditions be present.
Thunderstorms	Thunderstorms are possible in Cerro Castillo. Passes, summits, and other exposed areas should be avoided in thunderstorms. The rain that comes with thunderstorms can last for hours, so it is important to carry raingear and a pack cover and use these when it first starts to rain to avoid getting wet.
Hypothermia	While hypothermia is a greater risk in winter, it can become a real risk in summer, especially under wet conditions. For this reason, it is very important to avoid wearing cotton clothing (this takes too long to dry), and to bring good quality rain gear, as well as a pack cover. It is best to use your rain gear as soon as it starts raining, to prevent yourself from getting wet. It is also important to always have a dry change of clothes available and to have adequate layers to stay safe in cold conditions.
Snowstorms	Snow can happen any time of year. The most common problem associated with a snowstorm is reduced visibility, which makes navigation extremely difficult and slow. Be prepared for cold weather conditions, and do not head out on the trail if visibility is dangerously low.
Rockfall	Injuries from rockfall are incredibly rare, but it is a possibility. In most cases, rockfall is most likely to occur during rain

	<p>and severe storms. Any areas that are prone to rockfall should be avoided during such conditions. If you do need to move through such an area, we recommend you do so quickly and do not take any breaks. Rockfall is also common on hot and sunny days below glaciers or snowfields. Any time you cross below a glacier or snowfield, we advise you to move quickly and avoid taking any breaks. It is also best to avoid doing so during the hottest parts of the day.</p>
Landslides	<p>Landslides are uncommon but can occur especially during severe storms that last several days. As always, we recommend you check with the local rangers to identify if they see any risk for this. However, the potential for a landslide is not always identified in advance, and it is important to acknowledge that this is simply a risk of outdoor activity.</p>
Fire	<p>Fires can be extremely challenging in the park due to the high winds that can spread them very quickly. General rules to follow in case of a fire is to identify the direction of the wind, so you can identify which direction you need to go to get out of the path of the fire. Travel downhill along streambeds or gravel roads with little vegetation. The black areas that have already burned are unpleasant but are the safest places to be. Check out this article for more tips on staying safe in a fire.</p>
Earthquakes and Volcanos	<p>Chile sits on the ring of fire and is subject to volcano eruptions and earthquakes. Earthquakes can cause immediate danger for you while hiking, as they can cause rockfall, landslides, and collapse buildings. Earthquakes may also cut off access to help and supplies. A volcano eruption is not likely to occur in the immediate vicinity, but it is possible for the ash to reduce visibility and degrade air conditions, as well as to prevent travel in and out of the area for several days.</p>
Falling in an exposed area	<p>There are only a few areas where the terrain is steep enough that a fall could be dangerous. Use care in these areas and move slowly and steadily through the terrain.</p>
Dehydration and exhaustion	<p>Both dehydration and exhaustion not only create a dangerous health situation for you, but they also cause impaired judgement and poor decision-making. It is critical that you take care to not only carry enough water with you to stay hydrated, but to also drink regularly. We recommend using a water bladder with a drinking hose, so you can drink regularly on the go. We also recommend eating enough food,</p>

	<p>particularly salty snacks, and taking enough breaks to keep your energy at a reasonable level. If you start to feel confusion or moodiness creep in, take a break and eat and drink something before moving on. We recommend carrying a bandana or buff with you that you can dip in streams and then wear on your head to keep cool on hot days.</p>
Sunburns	<p>Sunburns are common, yet so easy to avoid. Please make sure you use sun protection on both sunny and cloudy days. Apply sweat-proof sunblock regularly, and use hats, sunglasses and clothing to protect from the sun's rays.</p>
Blisters	<p>A blister may be one of the greatest threats you face on your tour. Although they rarely require a rescue, a blister can truly suck the fun right out of your adventure. Plan ahead for blisters. The most important step you can take is to ensure your footwear fits well and is worn in. But even with a well-worn pair of hiking boots, the change in the topography where you are hiking, can cause new friction points. We recommend either applying an anti-chafing cream or wearing sock liners to prevent friction as much as possible. ALWAYS stop as soon as you feel a hotspot and apply moleskin (available in the U.S.) or Compeed (available elsewhere) to the hotspot. DO NOT APPLY DIRECTLY ONTO A FORMED BLISTER. If a blister does develop, have a plan and the proper supplies to treat that blister. Tip: duct tape can be very useful in keeping moleskin or bandages in place on your feet. Also, this is somewhat unrelated, but clip your toenails regularly during your tour to prevent pain.</p>
Minor illness	<p>Minor illness can surprise us at any time. And while it may be minor, it can make physical activity extremely challenging. We recommend minimizing the risk of minor illness by eating foods and taking supplements that support your immune system, leading up to and during your tour. We also recommend avoiding foods that are known to cause issues for you, drinking bottled water if your stomach is sensitive and maintaining good hygiene throughout the duration of your tour. If you do fall ill and it is not wise to continue, please only continue hiking if you are fit enough to do so.</p>
Dangerous wildlife	<p>While any wildlife can become dangerous if they are not given their space or if they feel threatened, the Puma presents the greatest risk in Patagonia. Although chances of seeing a puma are slim. With that said, the Pumas have plenty of food available and, as they are protected, do not see humans as</p>

	threats, so incidents are extremely rare. Should you spot a puma, and it exhibits aggressive behavior, back away slowly, always facing the cat. If it attacks, make yourself appear as big as possible and speak with a loud and deep voice. Fight back.
Flooding	Flooding is rare but can occur during and after heavy rainfall. This can be severe enough that it prevents the safe passage of the trail. During times of heavy rainfall, be sure to check with the hut staff or local guides for any advice on flooding risk. If you encounter a stream or river that you cannot safely cross, turn around and return to your last accommodation.
Hut/Hotel Fire	Although rare, fires can take place at your accommodation. It is important to always identify the location of fire extinguishers and evacuation routes upon first arriving at your accommodation.
Theft	Crime is rare throughout Patagonia, but theft can certainly be a risk in cities and in areas of public transportation, such as major train stations, as well as in areas visited by a large volume of tourists. We recommend keeping your personal items securely with you, and to avoid wearing expensive jewelry or accessories. One of the best ways to prevent theft is to simply pay attention to the people around you. Avoid being distracted by your phone or a book while in public areas, including public transportation.
Demonstrations and political unrest	Chile experiences frequent demonstrations and political unrest, especially around election time. We advise all customers to stay away from demonstrations. There have been times when these demonstrations have led to violence and looting, which has resulted in an enforced curfew for parts of, or the entire, country. Adhere to all curfews.
Public transportation accident	Public transportation in Chile is considered to be safe. An accident is very rare but is still possible. We recommend following all signs and instructions when taking public transportation to keep yourself as safe as possible should something occur.
Private transport accident	More common than with public transportation, are accidents that occur on the road with rental cars or with private transport vehicles. We advise our customers to wear seat belts at all times and to abide by speed limits and signage. If there are any concerns regarding a vehicle we have ordered

	for private transport, contact us immediately so we can find a replacement.
Medical services may be below international standards	Medical services in the urban centers of Chile are usually reliable, modern and sanitary. But services in rural areas may not be up to international standards. We recommend obtaining a travel insurance that covers medical evacuation insurance, that will transport you back to your home country, in the case that you need medical care.
COVID-19	Chile been heavily impacted by the presence and spread of the COVID-19 virus. We advise all of our customers to follow appropriate safety protocol as long as the threat remains. This includes wearing a face mask when indoors or interacting with others, keeping 1.5 meters of distance from others, and washing hands regularly. Huts and hotels may have additional measures in place to keep you safe, and we expect that all Alpenventures customers will follow these.
Other threats identified for your destination country as identified by the World Health Organization and by your home government	The safety situation in Chile is dynamic and can change at any time. We expect all travelers to inform themselves of the safety and health risks their governments warn of for the country of destination, as well as any additional health risks identified by the World Health Organization. Here are some sources to check: Auswärtiges Amt (Germany), State Department (U.S.), Foreign Travel Advice (U.K.), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia), and the World Health Organization (worldwide).

¹The most common injury that is evacuated from the trail is an ankle injury. You may be surprised to hear that there is no statistical difference based on the choice of shoe (trail runner vs. hiking boot with ankle support), but instead there has been a correlation shown between the Body Mass Index (BMI) of the hiker and the severity of the ankle injury. Based on this information, we strongly recommend adopting an ankle strengthening routine, as well as balance and stability training, into a regular fitness routine as you prepare for your tour.

²Alpenventures provides customers with free access to a navigation app that works offline on your smartphone. However, this is only helpful if the smartphone remains functioning and charged. There may be opportunities to recharge the smartphone at the mountain huts and other accommodations along the way, but this is not guaranteed. We recommend either carrying a solar charger and charging cable for your phone, or a GPS device with replaceable batteries (and enough batteries for the tour). Alpenventures can send you the GPS coordinates for your GPS device upon request.

Specific Risks for Backpacking Cerro Castillo in Patagonia	
Risk	Mitigation
High wind	Do not underestimate the wind in Patagonia. It can and does knock hikers off their feet. You'll often hear a gust of wind before it hits you. We recommend you crouch close to the ground when you know a strong wind gust is on its way.
Rapidly changing weather	When you look at a world map, you'll notice how close Patagonia is to Antarctica. Don't underestimate this. Even in the summer, you can experience very cold conditions. It is important to be prepared with layers that can protect you from cold, wind, and/or rain. Always keep one set of clothes dry for the evenings.
Stream crossings	There are some stream crossings included in this itinerary. It is important to take care at the crossings and to follow proper protocol. Unclip your waist belt and sternum strap of your backpack, so you can remove it quickly if necessary. Cross as a group, linking arms with each other. Face upstream and cross at a slight angle downstream. Always maintain at least two point of contact with the ground (a leg and a pole).

Our Commitment

Your safety is extremely important to us at Alpenventures GmbH. We understand that along the way, you may need to make decisions that alter your itinerary. When presented with these situations, we will be here to help, and will assist with identifying solutions and making changes to your bookings. We will cover the financial costs within reason, but there may be some expensive solutions, such as taking a taxi for a long distance to route around a difficult section of trail, that we are unable to take on for you. All itinerary changes that are made for safety reasons will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Alpenventures does not offer emergency services. Hikers are reliant on the local infrastructure of search and rescue services.

Summary

While there are certainly risks associated with outdoor adventure, there are a lot of things you can do to minimize those risks. Having a proper training routine leading up to your adventure, ensuring you have adequate vision and are in good health for the tour, as well as planning ahead for navigation and packing the right items are a good start. From there, gathering information, both before and during your tour, and making safe decisions as you go will all help ensure that your big adventure is as safe and secure as possible.