

EL CALAFATE: THE CHARMING GATE TO LOS GLACIARES NATIONAL PARK



South American countries have long attracted travelers for so many reasons; there are countless artifacts reminding us of the fact that this continent is the cradle of ancient civilizations. The natural wonders lure adventurers from all over the planet. The exotic mighty rivers, spectacular mountains, lush rainforests and rare flora and fauna are well worth all the trouble. Argentina belongs to the countries which are admired for its wondrous diversity.

One of the most frequented places here, which immediately gains respect and astonishes at first sight is the Los Glaciares National Park (UNESCO site). For true adventurers there are several glacial circuits, such as Viedma Glacier, Upsala Glacier, Onelli Glacier, Mayo Glacier or Perito Moreno Glacier (often dubbed “the eighth wonder of the world”). The ideal starting point to the National Park is a little village of El Calafate.

Its inhabitants are unbelievably friendly and hospitality is their life’s credo. There are only about 5000 of locals who permanently live here, however the numbers change with the incoming tourists. The village is located on the southern bank of Lake Argentino, in the southwest province of Santa Cruz.

Initially, El Calafate was founded as a staging post for wool traders. Gradually, more tradesmen settled here and in 1927 the village was officially founded. Its name is derived from a small bush very typical for this region. Local folk uses its fruit to bake cakes, pies, make jam or even drinks. It is said that those who taste is shall return here.

The truth is that most visitors are very hesitant to leave. The setting is painfully beautiful as El Calafate is surrounded by steppes, mountains, lakes, woods and glaciers. The main avenue is a charismatic display of charming houses, little stores, remarkable restaurants and craft stores. The place is one of the most outstanding treasures in Argentina’s tourist arsenal well worth the international praise it’s been receiving.

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