



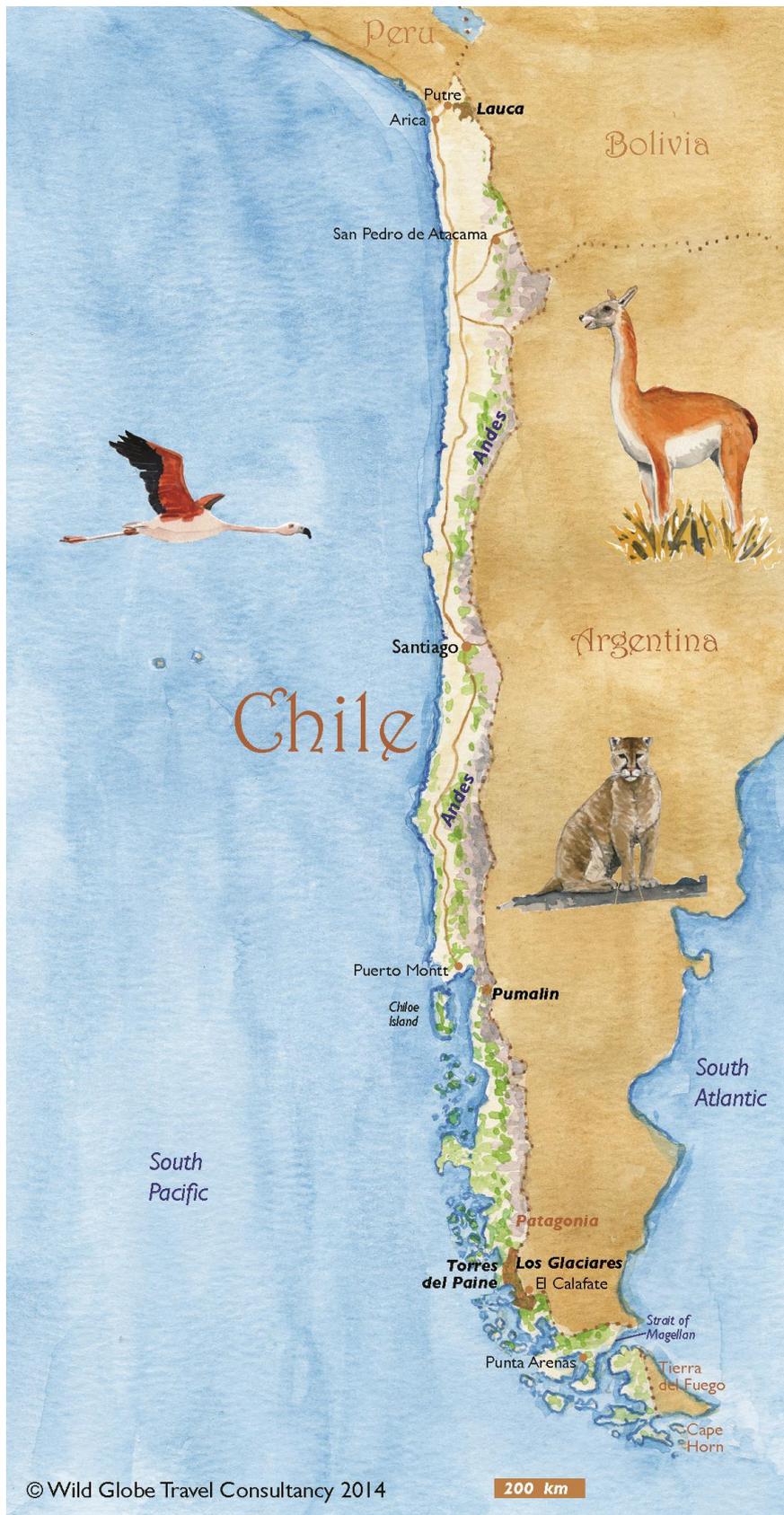
Wild Globe Travel Consultancy

Tailored Wildlife, Wilderness and Adventure Travel Across the Globe.

14 Greenfield Road, Eastbourne,
East Sussex BN21 1JJ, UK

Tel: +44 (0)1323 731865
Mob: +44 (0)7821 640118

Email: jason.woolgar@btinternet.com
Website: www.wildglobetours.com



Contrasts of Chile - 40 Days (Chile and Argentina)

Major Destinations

Santiago - Punta Arenas - Strait of Magellan - Magdalena Island - Francisco Coloane Marine Park - Carlos III Island - Torres Del Paine National Park - El Calafate - Los Glaciares National Park - Perito Moreno Glacier - Puerto Montt - Chiloe Island - Pumalin Park - San Pedro De Atacama - Arica - Putre - Lauca National Park



Tour Highlights and Activities

A wonderfully varied adventure highlighting the magnificent contrasts of Chile, from the huge glaciers and striking fjords of Patagonia, through the haunting landscapes of the Atacama Desert and on to the second highest plateau on earth, the Altiplano, a dazzling wilderness of extraordinary light and remarkable scenery within the heart of the mighty Andes mountain range. The wildlife is equally diverse and we will search for blue and humpback whales, with the possibility of also finding the killer whales that hunt them, as well as puma at Torres Del Paine National Park, the best place to see these elusive cats in all the Americas. On a trip full of vast, panoramic landscapes, the visit to the world-famous Perito Moreno Glacier in Argentina will live long in the memory, as will our time at both the Salar de Tara in the Atacama and the Cotacotani Lagoons in Lauca National Park. The many activities include unforgettable ocean voyages, lake and river cruises, exciting 4x4 trails, spotlighting for nocturnal animals, hiking, horse-riding, kayaking and swimming in a succession of gorgeous natural pools and hot springs. In addition to the spectacular setting and rare wildlife, we have the opportunity to experience the warm hospitality and rich culture of the Chilean people and to relish a supreme sense of freedom as we traverse this enchanting land.

Day 1 - Santiago to Punta Arenas

Arrive in the capital Santiago and catch a connecting flight to Punta Arenas, the gateway to Chilean Patagonia. Although this flight is being used as a transfer, it is also one of the continent's most scenic and those fortunate enough to secure a window seat will have an uninterrupted view of the legendary Andes, the world's longest mountain range, stretching 7000km down the spine of South America and across seven countries. Depending on when exactly we arrive, we should have time to walk down to the Strait of Magellan, the famous channel that links the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, first navigated by the celebrated Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan in 1520.

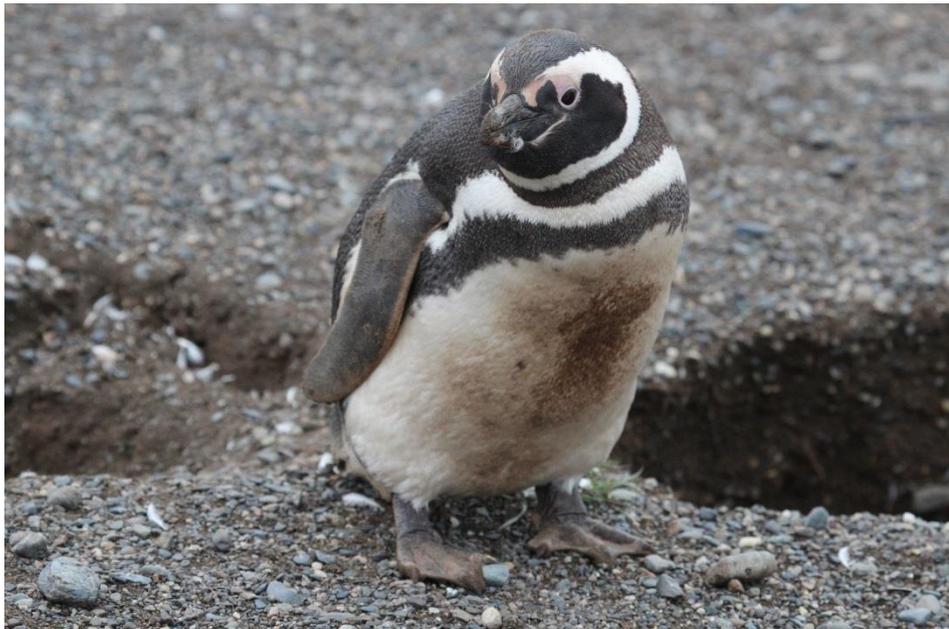
Day 2 - Punta Arenas

We have an early start this morning for the first exciting activity of the trip, an inflatable Zodiac boat tour on the renowned strait to Magdalena Island, a nesting colony at this time of year for more than 60,000 pairs of Magellanic penguins. The island can be explored on foot, with fabulous opportunities to photograph the penguins and their extremely fluffy chicks at very close quarters, and we will also visit nearby Marta Island, where we can approach more penguins and South American sea lions, but not actually alight. On a tour that will introduce us to so many diverse species throughout the country, we may today also encounter elephant seals, two highly

distinctive dolphin species, commerson's and peale's, and, depending on our good fortune, even humpback whales. We have a number of options for the afternoon, including an interesting tour to learn a little of the history of Punta Arenas, kayaking on the Strait of Magellan, or horse riding with great coastal views just south of town.

Days 3 to 6 - Punta Arenas to Cape San Isidro to Carlos III Island to Punta Arenas

This morning we depart on a very special short trip to visit the rich feeding grounds of the humpback whale and almost guaranteed sightings of these majestic creatures, many of which are likely to be at extremely close quarters as they approach our boat. Our initial



ocean transfer will take us south along the Strait of Magellan to Cape San Isidro for one night before we depart the next morning for Carlos III Island within the Francisco Coloane Marine Park. San Isidro is one of the best places in Patagonia to see the endangered huemul, or south Andean deer, and we can either spend our first afternoon searching the coastal forests for these striking animals or go kayaking, possibly with a pod of inquisitive dolphins for company. The next three days will be spent cruising to and then exploring the humpback whales main feeding areas around Carlos III Island, with the opportunity to photograph some of the largest mammals on the planet breaching and fluking athletically as they dive for the abundant krill, often just a few metres from our boat. On one of the best short marine tours that I am aware of, we also have an

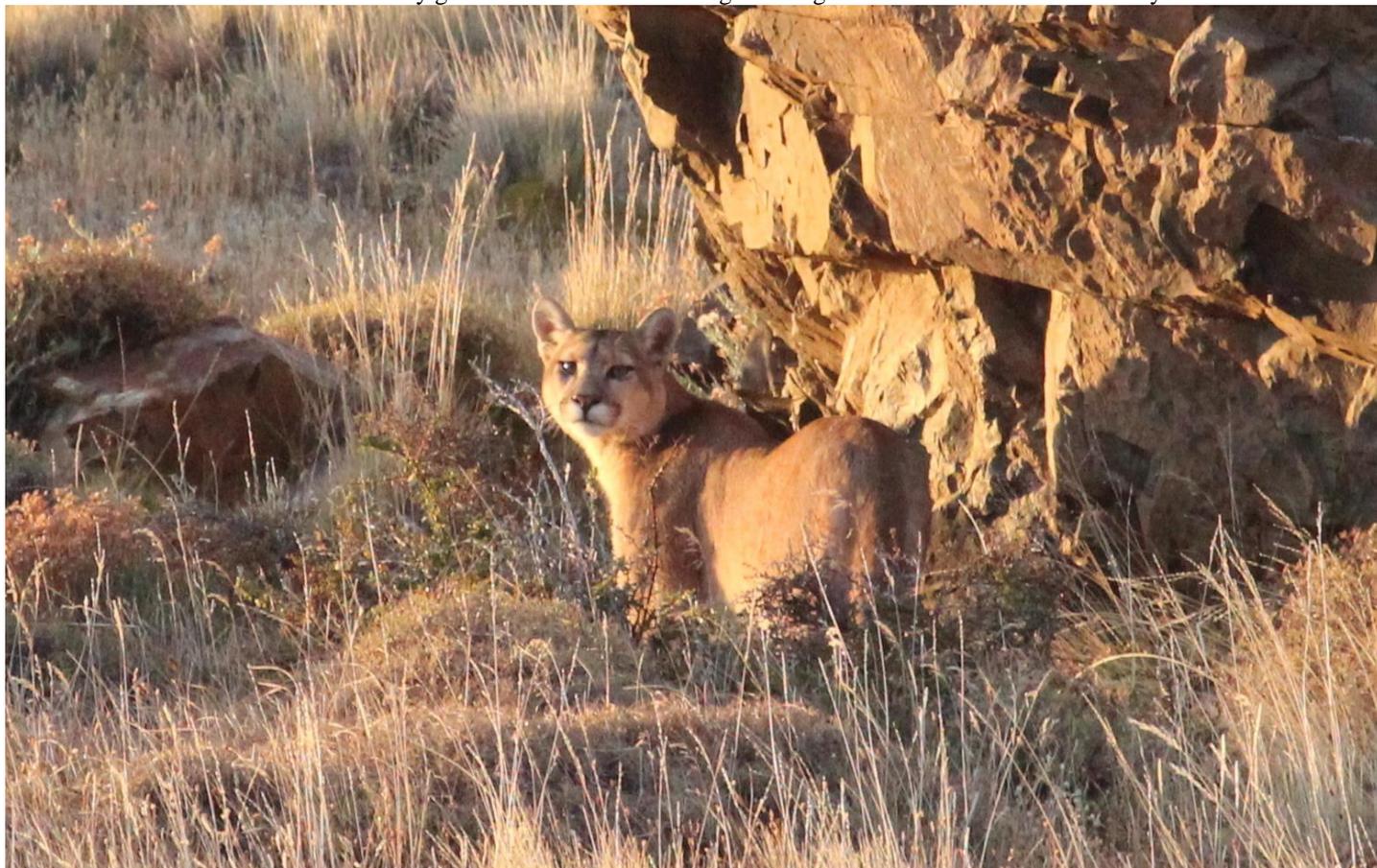
excellent chance to encounter a host of pelagic birds, penguins, sea lions, dolphins, seals and possibly even killer whales. It is always a wonderful thrill to watch these beautiful 'wolves of the sea' cutting menacingly through the waves and it is not only the wildlife here that is spectacular, as the imposing landscapes are equally astounding, particularly the dramatic Santa Ines Glacier, which we will make a point of visiting and which few will ever forget. Our ecolodge is ideally situated with splendid ocean views and the blend of dazzling wildlife and astonishing scenery is a combination that we will enjoy repeatedly at various destinations within this magical country. Our final day will be spent at sea as we travel back to Punta Arenas to overnight.





Day 7 - Punta Arenas to Torres Del Paine National Park

We leave Punta Arenas early this morning by road and transfer to one of my favourite destinations in this or any other country, Torres Del Paine National Park, an immense, dramatic wilderness, where the beauty of the scenery is rivalled only by the exquisite solitude experienced whilst exploring it. This is truly a special place, where it is possible to track a puma on foot until you are staring at one another from less than ten metres and where we can watch a dozen or so immature Andean condors learning to fly from the jagged peaks in the presence of their hugely impressive parents. After lunch and an opportunity to settle at our lodge, selected in one of the best wildlife areas in the park, we will meet our exceptional local guide, who has lived within the national park for more than twenty years and who knows every inch of her sparkling terrain, including how and where to find the generally elusive puma. We will begin our search this afternoon and have a very good chance of encountering this elegant animal over the next few days.



Days 8 to 12 - Torres Del Paine National Park

Although highly representative of Patagonia, the wildlife at Torres Del Paine is very different to that found across the savannahs and rainforests of much of South America and we will spend the next five days looking for puma and a number of other unusual species, many of which we are likely to encounter. In addition to our main target the puma, geoffroy's cat and pampas cat also occur, although

they are always difficult to find, as well as the far more commonly viewed chilla and culpeo fox species. Guanaco abound, one of four llama variants that we will encounter on this trip, and huemul, humboldt's hog-nosed skunk, large hairy armadillo, pichi, another type of armadillo, European hare and southern mountain cavy are all regularly observed. Patagonian weasel and lesser grison are two of the notoriously elusive nocturnal mammals, but we will look for these and other animals when we spotlight each evening around our lodge. Although much of our time will be devoted to searching for wildlife, both in our vehicle and on foot, we also have the option of taking a number of hikes amid some of the most mesmerising landscapes imaginable, where idyllic turquoise lakes shimmer resplendently against the magnificent backdrop of the imposing Cuernos del Paine massif and the three iconic granite towers after which Torres del Paine is named. The views of and from the Nordenenskjold and Pehoe lakes are exceptional and the



views of and from the Nordenenskjold and Pehoe lakes are exceptional and the

power generated through the narrow gorge of the Salto Grande waterfall, which flows from the former into the latter, is deceptively impressive given that the surging torrent does not fall from any great height. The Lago Grey Glacier is another outstanding natural feature that we will devote an afternoon to, as we have the opportunity to take a boat trip to the very edge of this dramatic sheet of ice and the area around the lightly forested, southern section of the lake is ideal habitat for huemul. When we get tired of walking we have the option of extended horse rides along a range of arresting trails, or of simply relaxing and enjoying the wonderful panoramas and gorgeous sunsets at a variety of commanding viewpoints easily reached from the road.



Day 13 - Torres Del Paine National Park to Los Glaciares National Park to La Anita Valley

Although it is always difficult to say goodbye to Torres Del Paine, our early start this morning will culminate in one of the highlights of the trip, a brief visit to the Glaciers National Park and the breathtaking Perito Moreno Glacier, a vastly impressive and constantly expanding wall of ice stretching over 30km and extending into Lake Argentino to form a natural dam when it reaches the opposite shore. Our journey takes us beyond the borders of Chile and into Argentina for just the one night and we will meet our local guide at the pleasant town of El Calafate. Like many of the great natural spectacles across the world, Perito Moreno is located within an area of extraordinary beauty and more time can certainly be devoted to exploring the Glaciers National Park if that appeals, either on this tour or on a dedicated tour of Patagonia. One of almost 50 glaciers within the Southern Patagonian Ice Field, Perito Moreno is the most visited and a number of excellent vantage points have been constructed along a scenic trail through and above the pretty lakeside woods. Although these provide several superb photographic opportunities, the best way to appreciate the immense power of this continually evolving natural phenomenon is on the cruise that takes us along the sheer 70m high barrier of ice, which groans and roars as vast shards of ice break away and fall spectacularly into the embracing depths of the lake. Having witnessed one of nature's undisputed masterpieces, we will complete a memorable day at our elegant lodge within the stunning La Anita Valley, with sweeping, panoramic views of Mount Frias, superb food and an irresistible indoor swimming pool.



Day 14 - La Anita Valley to Punta Arenas to Puerto Montt

Today is mainly a travelling day, as we transfer back to Punta Arenas by road to catch a flight to Puerto Montt on the Ancud Gulf. Fortunately, the long drive is another scenic one and we will make a number of stops to admire the best of many staggering views, as well as the wildlife that we are likely to encounter, including lesser rhea, culpeo and a few of the hares that the culpeo will no doubt be hunting. Upon arrival at Puerto Montt we will transfer directly to our nearby hotel, as we prepare for the next exciting stage of our adventure.

Day 15 - Puerto Montt to Chiloe Island

We have a leisurely morning after our busy travelling day, followed by a short transfer south to Pargua, to catch the ferry to Chacao on Chiloe Island, the largest of an archipelago in the Pacific ocean and home to some of the last remaining areas of temperate, coastal rainforest in southern Chile. On the ferry crossing there is the possibility of viewing peale's dolphin, Chilean dolphin and South American sea lion and, as foot passengers, there is the option of crossing more than once if this appeals. We will meet our local guide as soon as we disembark and transfer west to the first of two equally nice lodges that we will divide our time between in order to view



some of the island's extremely rare wildlife. Our first encounter will be a diverting one, as we spend the afternoon enjoying the antics of a group of marine otters, as they eat crabs floating along on their backs or climb onto a convenient buoy to eat in a slightly more conventional manner and provide us with far better photographs. Back at our lodge, a short walk through the sprawling cliffside vegetation is likely to be rewarded with good views of the diminutive southern pudu, which, at around 40cm, is the world's smallest deer. In the evening there will be a chance to spotlight in the extensive grounds of our accommodation, primarily to search for monito del monte, a tiny nocturnal and arboreal marsupial, and the highly elusive kodkod, a small cat that can occasionally be viewed in each of the two main areas we will visit on the island. All three of these rare animals are endemic to the stretches of rainforest found on Chiloe and sections of the mainland and all three owe their continued existence to the preservation of this unique habitat.

Days 16 to 21 - Chiloe Island

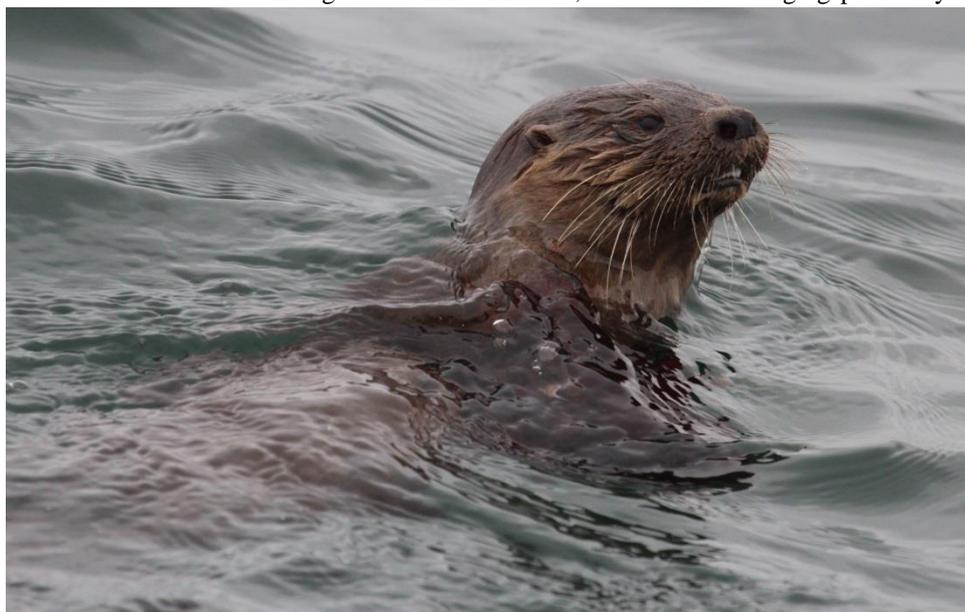
Depending on how successful we are, at least one day will be reserved for a very special ocean voyage to search for blue whales, the largest mammal on the planet and, at over 30m long and weighing up to 180 tonnes, certainly the most impressive. Our chances of



seeing these captivating creatures are reasonable at this time of year, as blue whales are spotted fairly regularly off the west coast of Chiloe and we will be in the fortunate position of being able to take to the boat if one is seen more or less anywhere along an extended stretch of coast. If we are lucky, for most it will be an event of a lifetime, as these whales are as gentle and graceful as they are powerful and to spend time with one is a unique privilege that very few people will ever experience. Other boat trips take place on the picturesque Anguay and Puntra rivers at Chepu and on both we have a chance to observe coypu swimming among the sublime gallery of fallen trees, as well as southern river otter, which is endangered despite having a wide range across much of southern Chile and Argentina. Another trip will take us

to the humboldt and magellanic Penguin colony at Puniuil, one of the few places where the two species live side by side, and we will change lodges after probably four nights, again depending on what exactly we have seen, and will spend our remaining time searching for the critically endangered darwin's fox, one of the World's smallest and rarest canids. Of a remaining population estimated at no more than 250, around 90% are believed to live among the forests of Chiloe, with the rest clinging perilously to

survival in one tiny, isolated pocket on the mainland. Although encounters with these endearing foxes are always magical, I include this part of the trip largely to highlight the critical plight of an entire species and to stress upon the local community that visitors are interested in seeing these foxes and that they are consequently worth conserving. Nature as a resource may not sound entirely ethical, but in many cases all over the world it represents the future of wildlife conservation and the continued survival of a large number of species, as local people begin to realise that the 'pest' they have done their best to eradicate over decades may actually play an essential role within the ecosystem that they are now attempting to attract visitors to. At present, and despite the



inevitable pressure from human settlements, Chiloe remains a rich, diverse environment and whether we are horse riding, kayaking or simply walking one of the many attractive trails, we are certain to come into contact with a wealth of flora and fauna, including the beautiful humming birds that proliferate parts of the island.

Day 22 - Chiloe Island to Chaiten to Pumalin Park

We return to the mainland this morning via the ferry to Chaiten, a town devastated by the eruption of the Chaiten Volcano in 2008. After a pause to photograph the active volcano and some of the extensive damage caused by the ensuing ash and mudslides, which actually changed the course of the Chaiten River and destroyed much of the small town, we will transfer by road to Pumalin Park, the largest privately-owned park in the world and one of the most enchanting destinations in Chile. Administered by The Conservation Land Trust, who operate several programmes protecting hundreds of thousands of acres of pristine wilderness across both Chile and

Argentina, Pumalin Park is considered to be a model for private conservation initiatives, as land restoration and the protection of wildlife is practiced in conjunction with ecotourism, sustainable farming and environmental education, much of which assists local communities. We have the opportunity to learn a little more about a few of the sustainable projects that have been developed in partnership with these communities, as each low impact industry or smallholding also acts as a park station and visitor information centre, a couple of which we will visit as we traverse the full expanse of the beautiful sanctuary from the Amarillo Valley in the south to the Hornopiren Andean volcano in the north.



Days 23 to 27 - Pumalin Park

Our days at Pumalin are very flexible and our accommodation will be based on the interests of the group, as comfortable cabins are available at certain locations, but camping makes more sense for those interested in discovering some of the more remote regions of the park. We will spend much of our time exploring the rolling green meadows, unspoiled rainforest and amazing crystal blue fjords by motorboat, kayak and on foot, taking time to relax in at least one of several tempting hot springs and to enjoy some of the many picturesque hiking trails hidden among the lush forest and imposing snow-capped mountains.



The overnight hike to the base of the glaciated Michinmahuida Volcano is particularly inspiring, as is the Vodudahue and Barcelo rivers trail, which meanders through a narrow valley surrounded by soaring mountains and ends at a delightful lagoon. During our activities we are likely to encounter at least some of the resident wildlife, including healthy populations of culpeo, molina's hog-nosed skunk, southern pudu, monito del monte, huemul, coypu, southern river otter and lesser grison, a mustelid, similar in appearance to Africa's honey badger. Puma and kodkod also occur and at night we can spotlight for these and other animals before returning to our welcoming camp fire to unwind after another long, but immensely satisfying day. From the

kayak we have the thrilling possibility of encountering killer whales, although dolphins, marine otters and sea lions are more realistic possibilities, and the gorgeous Amarillo Valley is the perfect setting for an early morning or sunset horse ride.

Day 28 - Pumalin Park to Puerto Montt to Calama to San Pedro De Atacama

Our final night at Pumalin will be spent in the northern section of the park and we therefore have a fairly easy drive this morning to Puerto Montt to catch the connecting flight to Calama, the gateway to the hauntingly beautiful Atacama Desert. Our base for the next few days will be the historic and highly convenient town of San Pedro de Atacama, which lies around 100km south east of Calama and is ideally situated in terms of accessing the distinctive geological wonders and absorbing, surreal landscapes that we will discover

here. As a perfect introduction, this afternoon we can visit the naturally sculptured rock formations and inspiring sand dunes of Valle de la Luna or 'Valley of the Moon', one of seven sections of the Los Flamencos National Reserve scattered across various parts of the Atacama, within easy reach of San Pedro. Our exceptional lodge is also just a few minutes from town and has been sympathetically designed to merge seamlessly into the surrounding landscape. The food is as outstanding as the hospitality and after long, hot days exploring the desert, the crystal clear pool is about as inviting as any I have plunged gratefully into.

Days 29 to 33 - San Pedro De Atacama and the Atacama Desert

Said to be the driest desert on earth, although it has received more significant rainfall in the last two years and I have visited recently when it snowed, the Atacama Desert stretches over 1000km along the formidable barrier of the Andes, which largely prevent the precipitation clouds of the Amazon basin reaching this far west. The lack of rain and a millennia of relentless wind erosion and exfoliation, a form of weathering caused by the constant exposure to extreme temperatures, has combined to create an astonishing and



intoxicating landscape of almost incomparable beauty. There are very few places like the Atacama and over the next five days we will explore the stark, arid treasures of this compelling region, including the evocative chiselled monoliths of the Salar de Tara, a lesser known but enormously rewarding destination that only a handful of travellers ever reach. This is a full day adventure and the magnificent views as our 4x4 scrambles high into the mountains and past the exquisitely symmetrical Licancabur Volcano are just the beginning. Visitors generally take more photographs on this day than any other on the entire trip and with good reason, as we will

approach one breathtaking 360 degree panorama after another and just when you think that the landscapes cannot get any more dramatic, they suddenly do. The lagoon itself is fed by the immense mountains that surround it and supports thriving populations of vicuna, as well as the domesticated llamas and alpacas that are allowed to graze on this protected site. Culpeo fox, southern mountain viscacha and two species of flamingo also occur, the Chilean and Puna varieties, and this is the easiest location that I am aware of, with just a modicum of patience, to photograph tawny tuco-tuco, a charismatic burrowing rodent prone to pop up for pictures on a reasonably regular basis. Despite the harsh conditions, the Atacama is actually home to an interesting variety of wildlife, most notably puma and Andean cat, both of which are only observed by total chance in such a vast and isolated expanse, chilla, although not this far north, lesser rhea, Andean condor, and the critically endangered short-tailed chinchilla, which was hunted to the point of extinction for their soft pelts and now only survive in this remote border area of the Atacama between Chile and Bolivia. Another highlight of our stay will be the Salar de Atacama, the second largest saltpan in the world after the Salar de Uyuni in neighbouring Bolivia, which is



approach one breathtaking 360 degree panorama after another and just when you think that the landscapes cannot get any more dramatic, they suddenly do. The lagoon itself is fed by the immense mountains that surround it and supports thriving populations of vicuna, as well as the domesticated llamas and alpacas that are allowed to graze on this protected site. Culpeo fox, southern mountain viscacha and two species of flamingo also occur, the Chilean and Puna varieties, and this is the easiest location that I am aware of, with just a modicum of patience, to photograph tawny tuco-tuco, a charismatic burrowing rodent prone to pop up for pictures on a reasonably regular basis. Despite the harsh conditions, the Atacama is actually home to an interesting variety of wildlife, most notably puma and Andean cat, both of which are only observed by total chance in such a vast and isolated expanse, chilla, although not this far north, lesser rhea, Andean condor, and the critically endangered short-tailed chinchilla, which was hunted to the point of extinction for their soft pelts and now only survive in this remote border area of the Atacama between Chile and Bolivia. Another highlight of our stay will be the Salar de Atacama, the second largest saltpan in the world after the Salar de Uyuni in neighbouring Bolivia, which is

within easy reach of San Pedro and can be visited for a few days if this is of interest. Whilst smaller than its Bolivian counterpart, the Salar de Atacama is still hugely impressive, as only a relatively small area resembles the smooth, blinding sea of white so familiar in the Uyuni and in other parts rough salt encrustations rise like gnarled coral from the ocean floor, principally due to the lack of rain and surface water this side of the border. Where small pools do form, the reflections can be magical, particularly at sunset when the blazing colours and intense light merge into the mirrored waters to extraordinary effect. The Salar also incorporates the Chaxa Lagoon, another section of the Los Flamencos National Reserve, which is fed by the San Pedro rivers and protects, not surprisingly given the name, a large number of Chilean, Andean and Puna flamingos. A further section of the reserve will bring us to the lovely Miscanti and Miniques lagoons, both of which are named after the mountains they sit within the shadow of and where we can expect to see more herds of graceful, but incredibly robust vicuna, which survive in one of the harshest environments imaginable. One morning will be reserved for a sunrise visit to the popular El Tatio Geysers, where the combination of arresting mountain views and dozens of venting geysers, all at an altitude of more than 4300m, has been attracting tourists for years. This trip is often combined with the hot springs at Puritama, as El Tatio lies to the north of the pretty valley spring and it is possible to soak away the dust of the desert in the warm, relaxing waters of both.



Day 34 - San Pedro De Atacama to Arica to Putre

This morning we drive back to Calama to catch the short connecting flight to the coastal city of Arica, which, at just 19km from the border of Peru, is the most northerly city in Chile. Upon meeting our guide at the airport

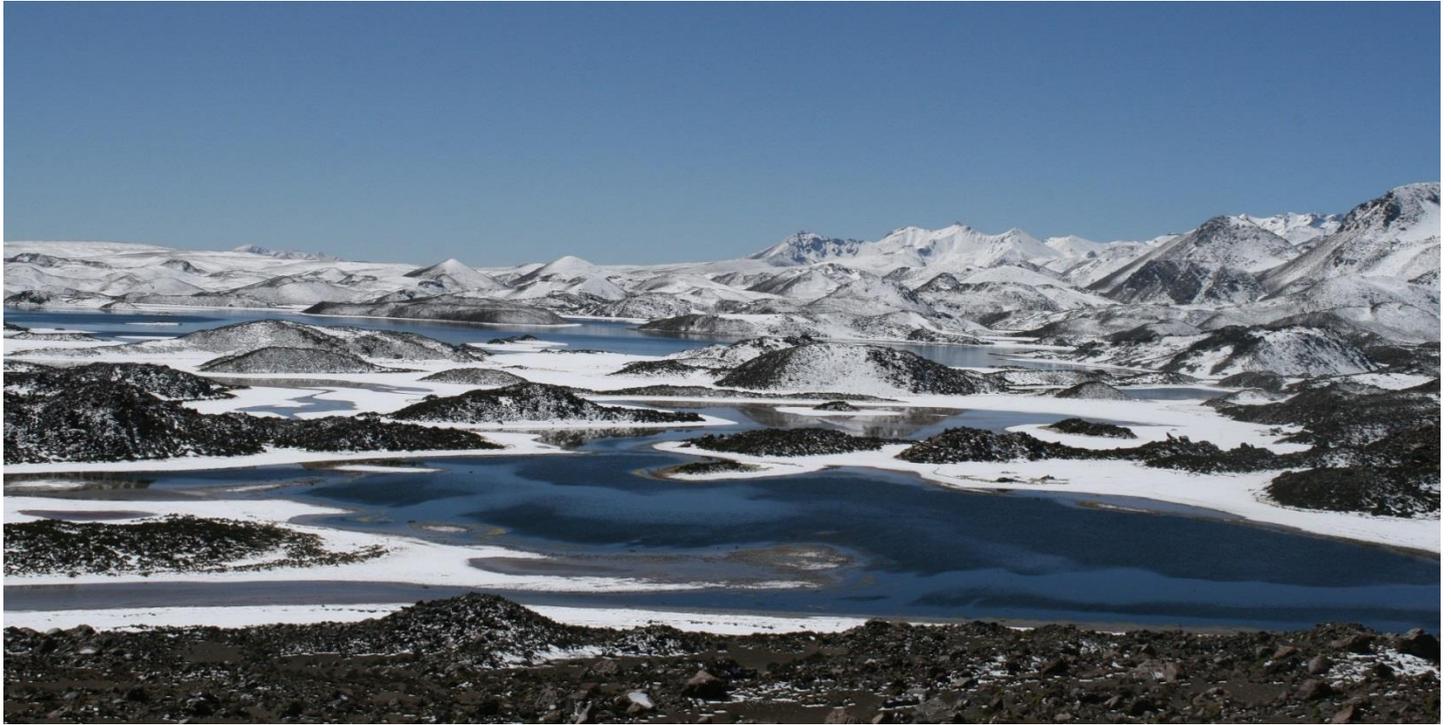


we will transfer by road to Putre, where we can acclimatize briefly for the slightly higher altitudes of the Altiplano region of the Andes and Lauca National Park, the last major destination of our tour and a more than fitting finale. After lunch at either of the two nicest restaurants in this lovely small town, both of which serve wonderful food, but are totally contrasting in appearance and atmosphere, we will take a short drive to an area well known for regular sightings of taruca, a relatively large deer, completely at ease on the rocky Andean slopes. It is usually possible to achieve excellent photographs of this attractive animal, but that cannot be said of our next elusive quarry, the Andean cat, which has been observed at the next spot we will drive to, but only on a handful of occasions and with absolutely no degree of regularity. We will have a better chance when we enter the national park and until then will have to content ourselves with a delicious meal at Putre and an evening spent relaxing at our lovely lodge or in the pretty central square of this charming town.

Days 35 to 39 - Putre and Lauca National Park

Given the splendour and magnitude of the landscapes already traversed, it is hard to imagine that Lauca could possibly improve on very many of them, but undoubtedly it does and by the end of our first days exploration there will be very few superlatives left unuttered. From the moment you enter the park and drive along the sparkling alpine streams, with herds of vicuna delicately grazing at the water's edge and snow-capped mountains rising imperiously in the distance, you begin to suspect that Lauca is one of those

very special places, by the time you reach the Chungara Lake and Cotacotani Lagoons, you are sure of it. Both offer superb views of the towering Parinacota Volcano, but the remarkable combination of volcanic behemoth, dazzling blue lagoons and snow spattered lava fields of Cotacotani, would be hard to equal anywhere on earth. If we are not exactly saving the best for last, at times it certainly feels like it, as we savour the final days of our trip against an astounding background of ancient, snowy mountains, iridescent lakes and verdant alpine meadows, all framed by the deepest blue sky imaginable and intensified by the most exceptional light possible. The photography here is first class and, in addition to the fairly simple task of capturing phenomenal shots of the scenery, we will do our best to photograph some of the resident wildlife, including northern mountain viscacha, giant rodents that sit sunning themselves obligingly as we snap away, Andean hairy armadillo, Andean cat, pampas cat, puma, culpeo, guanaco, molina's hog-nosed skunk, Andean condor, giant coot and Andean goose. On at least two of our five days we will drive south to the striking blanché salt lake at Salar de Surire, where we can take some memorable shots of the adjacent mountains reflected in the clear, shallow water and also of the Tacora Volcano, which rises to almost 6000m and sits on the very border of Peru. Both the Andean cat and the pampas cat, have been encountered in this area and at dusk we can search with spotlights before returning to Putre. For those who want a more first-hand experience of this epic wilderness, we also have the option of spending several nights under canvas within the park, instead of travelling the short distance from Putre each day.



Day 40 - Putre to Arica to Santiago

We say farewell to a very special country today, as we return to Arica by road to catch our connecting flight to Santiago, where our fantastic odyssey finally comes to an end. Overnight accommodation can be arranged in Santiago, depending on the departure of your international flight.

Additional Options

As with all of my trips, this tour can be adapted to meet your specific requirements and the duration, as well as the number of days at each destination, can be increased or reduced according to your needs. Although this version has been designed as an introduction to the wildlife and spectacular landscapes of the country, and would take place in the southern hemisphere summer, Chile has a great deal more to offer travellers with different interests and at different times of the year. For the more adventurous, the steep peaks and deep powder of the central Andes, easily accessible from Santiago, offer the best skiing and snowboarding in South America and heli-skiing is hugely popular in idyllic areas of pristine, mountain wilderness. For those who prefer to actually stay in the aircraft, helicopter and light aircraft flights can be arranged over several breathtaking sections of the Andes and the exhilarating grade 5 rapids on the Futaleufu River deliver some of the fiercest and most enjoyable white water rafting anywhere in the world. As you would expect in a country featuring the longest mountain range on earth, climbing and trekking opportunities abound, including challenging expeditions for serious climbers and extended hikes of several days for those who want to enjoy the sumptuous views, without participating in much of the risk. The first class vineyards of the central valley wine region have always been of international appeal and the piercing blue lakes, green conifer forests, cascading waterfalls and ice-capped volcanoes of the lake district, including the popular Puyehue and Vicente Perez Rosales national parks, are both easily visited from Puerto Montt. From Punta Arenas it is possible to travel further south to Puerto Williams, the gateway to Antarctica and the Beagle Channel in the Tierra del Fuego archipelago, another navigable stretch of water between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans immortalised by the voyage of the naturalist Charles Darwin in 1831. For those craving a little more civilisation, albeit of an ancient variety, additional tours can be arranged at San Pedro de Atacama, including to the fascinating and perfectly preserved ruins at Tulum, as well as the pre-columbian fort dating back to around the 12th century at Pukara de Quitor. Constructed from stone by the native Atacamenos on the summit of a hill overlooking the San Pedro River, the Pukara citadel has also been well preserved and was once clearly a formidable defensive position. Further north of San Pedro are some of the finest examples of geoglyphs this side of the Nazca Lines in Peru, with a number of accessible sites depicting literally hundreds of enthralling ancient symbols of animals, people and geometrical shapes. The most



impressive is the Gigante del Atacama or Giant of the Atacama, a colossal representation of a tribal leader fashioned on the side of a hill near Iquique. In a land of entrancing folklore, intimate locally guided visits offer a compelling insight into the traditional lives and culture of the indigenous communities and one of the world's most significant cultural sites, Easter Island, lies 3500km to the west in the Pacific Ocean. Although the famous and captivating Moai rock statues have no South American influence, they were carved by the Polynesian Rapa Nui people over the course of 250 years, Easter Island does form part of Chilean territory and is routinely served by flights from Santiago. Other, far closer and equally memorable destinations can also be added and visits to Chile are often combined with trips to neighbouring Argentina, Peru and Bolivia. As per my Visions of Patagonia tour, one of the most popular extensions is to the Valdes Peninsula in Argentina, where killer whales can be seen hunting the sea lion pups right up onto the beach at a number of different locations throughout the year. Bolivia's inimitable and somewhat overwhelming Salar de Uyuni is easily reached in a decent 4x4 from San Pedro de Atacama, the drive between the two is actually one of the highlights of a fabulous trip that can last several days, and the substantial Inca ruins and beautiful islands of Lake Titicaca lie just a short flight or long drive north from Arica. In a land of alluring contrasts and endless possibilities, the only problem with visiting Chile is deciding exactly which delights will have to wait until the next unforgettable trip.





14 Greenfield Road, Eastbourne,
East Sussex BN21 1JJ, UK

Tel: +44 (0)1323 731865
Mob: +44 (0)7821 640118

Email: jason.woolgar@btinternet.com
Website: www.wildglobetours.com

© Copyright 2014. All Rights Reserved (Wild Globe Travel Consultancy)

