

# ANTÁRTICA CHILENA PROVINCE

MAGALLANES AND ANTÁRTICA CHILENA REGION



## Antártica

*The last continent on Earth to be discovered.*

The Antártica Chilena is located about 1,000 km south of Punta Arenas and covers an area of 1,250,000 km<sup>2</sup>, with a very fragmented coastline. Chilean sovereignty in Antarctica is ensured by the existence of numerous bases and shelters, where families are dedicated to scientific research live.

Antarctic ice floats on the purest waters in the world and moves along the entire coast of the Chilean Patagonia. Here, the blue whale coexists with the krill, the king penguin with the Weddell seal, and the albatross with the petrels. These icy currents, which rule the air and the sea, have isolated this remarkable fauna from threats and extinctions. A place to admire and explore, dedicated to science, and that increasingly attracts visitors, who must follow rigorous standards to preserve its pure state of conservation.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Antarctica is the coldest, least polluted, and driest continent in the world, with an average annual rainfall of 166 mm. Katabatic winds can reach speeds of more than 300 kilometers per hour. In August 2010, the lowest temperature was recorded, based on satellite data: -93 °C, in the Argus dome on the highest point of the Antarctic plateau.

**LIVING IN ANTARCTICA.** Peninsula Fildes on Isla Rey Jorge has the highest concentration of research bases and stations in Antarctica. The Chilean population center Villa Las Estrellas and other national bases share space with Argentine, Uruguayan, Russian, and Chinese facilities, in keeping with cooperation and peace agreements. This is one of the continent's most important tourist

destinations, with landmarks such as the Russian Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity and the Monument to the Antarctic Treaty.

**BASES FOR AN ICY CONTINENT.** The differing purposes and needs of researchers and visitors mean that each base established in Antarctica has unique sizes and characteristics, both in terms of infrastructure and accommodation and in terms of available equipment and usage time. While some may be inhabited year-round, others may only house guests during the warmer months. Nevertheless, they are all designed to keep the cold out and to allow for the development of complex activities in an efficient, safe, and environmentally friendly manner.

**HOW FAR IS ANTARCTICA FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD?** The closest distance between Antarctica and another continental mass is the strait known as Paso Drake, which connects Magallanes and Antártica Chilena Region. In addition to its geographical isolation, its extreme weather conditions and the fierceness of the southern ocean have kept this continent in fragile solitude. It is only in the last hundred years that human beings have dared set foot on this inhospitable land, albeit one of immense scientific value and the common heritage of mankind.



## AN ANTARCTICA WITH FORESTS?

For most of its history, Antarctica was a green continent, full of life, similar to what one sees today in southern Chile. Warm temperatures were the result of a natural greenhouse phenomenon. However, about 28 million years ago, the continent began to become isolated and cool down. First, in the inner mountains, then in the valleys and coasts, until the trees could no longer survive. For 50 million years, the planet's climate has been in constant change, thanks to the deterioration caused by the greenhouse effect, the permanent glaciation of East Antarctica, and the appearance of the Antarctic Circumpolar Current, which is believed to have served as a thermal insulator for Antarctica. Today, the new global warming phenomenon is reversing the continent's permafrost in certain areas. The rise in temperature has weakened some of the glaciers formed over millions of years. Since the 1950s, average annual temperatures have increased by almost 2.5°C, much faster than in the rest of the planet, and winds have warmed about 5°C. This is why nowadays, as opposed to the previous seven decades, sea ice only forms for four months of the year.

## BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Thanks to complex interactions, the vast majority of animal and plant species are only able to survive on the edges of the southern continent, where they have access to ice-free land, the nutrients provided by the sea, and access to migration routes to warmer areas. As a result, many of these organisms coexist in relatively small spaces, which sometimes force them to collaborate, and sometimes to compete for food.

**FISH.** Having arrived millions of years ago from warmer waters, today there are hundreds of Antarctic species that are endemic to the continent, in all manner of shapes, sizes, and colors, yet always adapted to the cold and the darkness. Antarctic fish are one of the many mysteries that Antarctica has yet to reveal.

**ZOOPLANKTON.** Antarctic krill is the most common species in the ocean and the key to the survival of the ecosystem.

**WHALES.** Whales take advantage of the abundance of Antarctic marine life to feed during their migratory routes—blue whales, humpback whales, southern right whales, fin whales, Antarctic minke whales, and orcas.



**OTHER DOLPHINS.** Hourglass dolphin, southern right whale dolphin, spectacled porpoise, sperm whale, and beaked whales.

**MICROORGANISMS.** A universe of microscopic creatures survives in Antarctica, dwelling close to the few possible resources: the sea, land, plants, and animals and their waste.

**BIRDS CAPABLE OF FLIGHT.** They make long journeys to Antarctica to nest and hunt. In addition to penguins, members of the albatross and petrel, cormorant, sheathbill, skua, and seagull families appear at different times of the year.

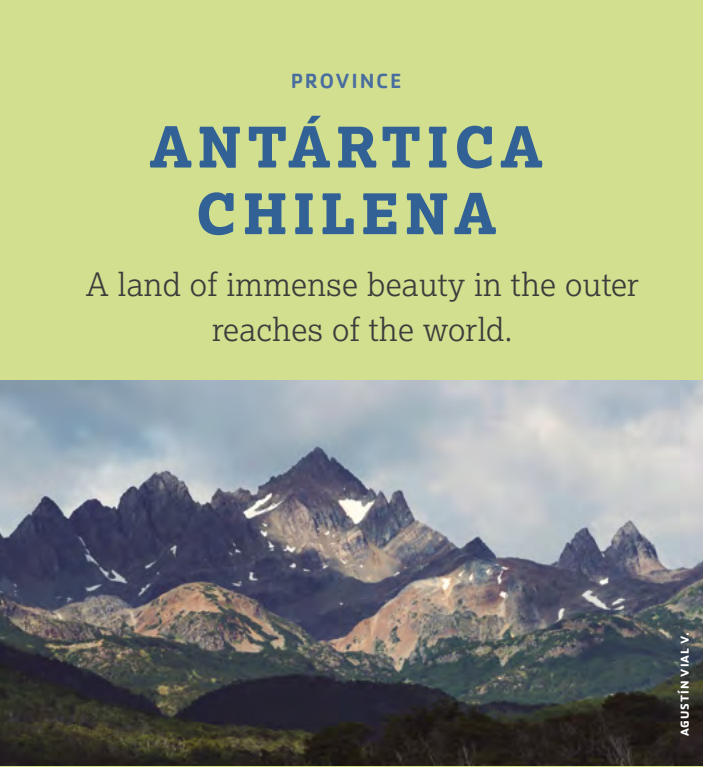
**PLANTS, LICHENS, MOSSES, FUNGI, AND ALGAE.** Despite being a decidedly inhospitable environment for most of the plant species on Earth, some have managed to survive and thrive both on land without ice or snow and in water, and even in the Southern Ocean.

**SEALS AND SEA LIONS.** Capable of inhabiting both land and sea, these mammals rest, mate, and breed on the beaches of the mainland and islands.

**ERNEST SHACKLETON (1874-1922).** British explorer famous for his Antarctic adventure as commander of the *Endurance*, who in 1914 entered the white continent with the intention of traveling from coast to coast through the South Pole. After five months, Shackleton and his crew were trapped in the ice. Nine months later, the pressure of the ice shattered the ship, leaving the crew stranded on a drifting iceberg for five months. They escaped in their lifeboats and, after five terrible days of travel, reached Isla Elefante. From there, Shackleton and five volunteers crossed 1,360 kilometers of rough sea aboard a small boat to get help. After three failed international rescue attempts, the stoic Chilean sailor Luis Alberto Pardo Villalón, commanding the Chilean Navy's cutter *Yelcho*, achieved the rescue. Amazingly, all the men survived, and much of this epic was immortalized in the photographs taken by a crew member, Frank Hurley.

**Literature:** SOUTH: The Illustrated Story of Shackleton's Last Expedition, Ernest Henry, Shackleton





PROVINCE

ANTÁRTICA CHILENA

A land of immense beauty in the outer reaches of the world.

The Chilean Antarctic province is the southernmost in the country. It is bicontinental, since it includes the insular southern end of the continental national territory, in addition to the entire Chilean Antarctic Territory. Its geography is partly covered by the Magellanic forest, due to the presence of the Dientes de Navarino mountain range, while to the south there is an extensive peat plain that fosters the existence of lakes and lagoons with abundant fauna.

The province's first sector corresponds to the district of Cabo de Hornos, with an area of 14,146 km<sup>2</sup>, and the second to Chilean territory in the Antarctic continent, with an area of 1,250,000 km<sup>2</sup>, covering a total area of 1,264,146 km<sup>2</sup>.

Isla Navarino is home to most of the population of the Antártica Chilena province and the Cabo de Hornos district, which was established in 1927 and was called Navarino until 2001. Puerto Williams, its capital, is considered the southernmost city

in the world and for centuries was home to the earliest indigenous peoples of the American continent: the Yaganes or Yamanas, who traveled across the channels in their fragile vessels until the arrival of the first seafarers. More than 7,000 years ago, their routes frequented the northern arm of the Beagle Channel and they spread along the coasts of Isla Navarino.

Between mid-November and March, weather conditions are optimal for navigating the world's southernmost seas, and cruise ships sail to Antarctica. Its landscapes are truly awe-inspiring and unique.

**CLIMATE.** Cold temperate, with an annual average temperature of 6.8° Celsius. The annual average rainfall is 347 millimeters, not counting the regular snowfalls in the winter months. Winds appear mostly in the summer, sometimes exceeding 100 kilometers per hour.



CAPITAL

Puerto Williams

*Puerto Williams is a strategic hub for shipping traffic between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans.*

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The geographical and hydrographic expeditions commissioned by the Kingdom of England, led by Commander Phillip Parker King and then Robert Fitz Roy, took place between 1826 and 1834. During the fourth campaign, Parker King and Fitz Roy named the island they were circling Navarino, in honor of the battle of Navarino that was waged off the coast of Greece on October 20, 1827.



PUERTO WILLIAMS

Must-sees

★ **MARTIN GUSINDE ANTHROPOLOGICAL MUSEUM.** The southernmost museum in the world. It was built in 1974 and named after Austrian anthropologist and priest Martin Gusinde, who worked among the Yaganes and Selknam between 1918 and 1924.

The Museum focuses on three main themes: its indigenous peoples, especially the Yagan people and their ancestors, the first inhabitants of the southernmost part of America; the historical process of discovery and exploration of the area from the seventeenth century to the present; and the ecosystem, landscapes, and natural environment of Isla Navarino and of Cabo de Hornos.

**Location:** Puerto Williams.  
**Free Admittance**

★ **CALETA WULAIA.** Historical site. It was one of the largest settlements in the region of the native canoe tribe, the Yaganes. Charles Darwin landed here during his trip aboard the HMS in 1833. This is a place whose vegetation and geography create a stunningly beautiful visual experience. It has a scenic lookout that can be reached by a 3-hour round-trip stroll through the forest.

**It can only be accessed by boat. One usually boards the boat at Puerto Navarino.**

★ **VILLA UKIKA.** Located one kilometer from Puerto Williams, it is undoubtedly a cornerstone of historical heritage, since the last descendants of the Yagan people live there. This is the ideal place to find local crafts and guides, who can share the legacy of the southernmost ethnic group in the world.

**It can be visited year round.**

On August 22, 1956, Puerto Luisa was renamed Puerto Williams, in honor of Frigate Captain Don Juan Williams Wilson, who commanded the schooner "Ancud" and claimed the Strait of Magellan in the name of the Republic of Chile on September 21, 1843.

Studies by archaeologists and specialists from other scientific disciplines have shown that remains indicative of human activity dating back approximately 6,500 years were found in the northern part of Isla Navarino. Moreover, in the so-called shellmounds, which are places where the natives used to eat, arrowheads, fishing gear, small baskets, and ceremonial masks have been discovered, which indicates their preference for inhabiting some of the more sheltered places in the Patagonian channels.

Puerto Williams is currently a strategic hub for shipping traffic between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. This town is also a platform for Chilean operations in the Antarctic Territory, given its proximity to the white continent.



WULAIA ROUTE

*Territory identified with the Yagan ethnic group.*

The Wulaia Route encompasses a unique cultural and natural heritage and, unlike the other circuits of Isla Navarino, it travels along the coast, offering extraordinary panoramic views of Seno Ponsonby and the Murray and Beagle channels, with numerous approaches to the Fuegian coastline. At the Wulaia, Lewaia, Jemmy Button and Marchant Island sites, among many other locations, visitors can admire the places frequented by the island's ancient inhabitants and witness a history of almost five centuries of exploration and discord between Western culture and the indigenous peoples. At the same time, the Wulaia route allows one to experience the rugged

**Difficulty:** Low  
**Distance:** 2 km  
**Duration:** One day, with boating



*Yaganes, the ancestral inhabitants of Cabo de Hornos.*

Navigation through southern channels was central to the daily life of the Fuegians, since they spent much of their time at sea on their canoes. This vessel transported the nuclear family, which was the political, social, and economic unit of the Yaganes, as well as their belongings and food utensils.



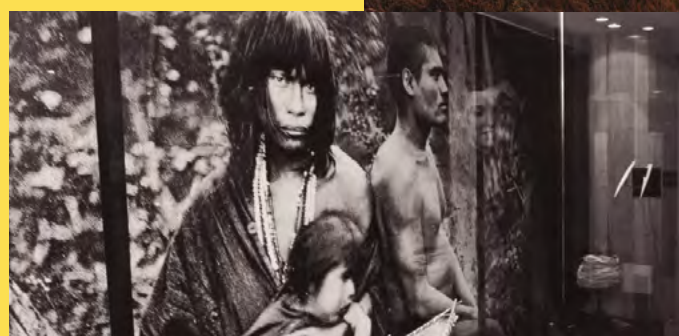
OMORA ETHNOBOTANICAL PARK

★ **PUERTO TORO.** This is the southernmost populated place in the world and is untouched by highways. Once a month, a barge arrives from Punta Arenas, bearing supplies. The rest of the time, Puerto Toro is isolated. Puerto Toro was intended to be a base for the authorities to impose order and prevent shootings. Gold prospectors were the first to arrive; then, the Chilean king crab and Chilean snow crab fishermen arrived for these valuable and appetizing morsels of the southern seas.

Between July 1 and November 30, during the catching season, 30-40 ships arrive. This is a floating population of 150 to 240 visitors, who sleep in their boats and fish between 4 a.m. and 4 p.m.

**Where to stay:** When tourists arrive, some homes offer lodging.

**KAYAK:** Definitely one of the must-sees during your visit to Isla Navarino; it is possible to kayak in



CERRO LA BANDERA

It starts at the beginning of the Dientes de Navarino trail. The trail crosses a lenga forest with a clearly marked path that is equipped with stairs and bridges to make it easier to transit. It offers beautiful views of Puerto Williams. The top of Cerro La Bandera is clearly visible from the La Bandera landmark. The cone that forms the summit is somewhat steeper, with a more pronounced slope and loose material. The view is extraordinary, with a cliff at the foot and the slender needles of the Dientes de Navarino at the back.

**Difficulty:** Medium-Low  
**Distance:** 5 km  
**Duration:** 4 hours round trip from Puerto Williams square.

**Note:** It is mandatory to register and give notice to police before beginning any walks and/or excursions to Dientes de Navarino and Cerro La Bandera. The same holds true for the return trip.

TREKKING, DIENTES DE NAVARINO

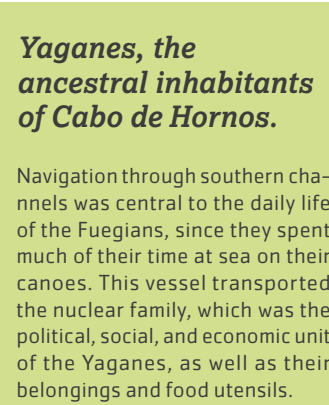


AUSTRIAN VALLEY

geography of the forests that cling to the soil of the fjords, islands, bays, and channels, and bridge countless ravines and watercourses that cross the trail.

Crossroads of sea and land are part of this landscape, bequeathed by the glaciations that took place over Earth's last two million years. However, the marine environment as we know it, this sea that is the lifeline and the link to the ancient canoe tribes—the Yagan community and its present-day inhabitants—has been shaped through a dynamic process over the past ten thousand years. The current environmental conditions are estimated to have arisen approximately 5,000 years ago.

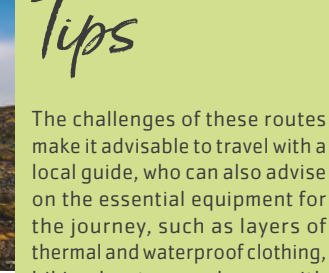
**Difficulty:** Low  
**Distance:** 2 km  
**Duration:** One day, with boating



the bay of Puerto Williams in the mythical Beagle Channel, with great opportunities for birdwatching.

**FISHING:** More and more sport fishing fans are choosing Isla Navarino to practice this discipline, where in Lakes such as the Windhond it is also possible to enjoy the imposing and wild nature of the Island.

**BIRDWATCHING AND LOCAL FAUNA:** due to the imposing and pristine nature of its landscapes, there is great biodiversity on the Island; we recommend you visit Punta Gusano, on the coast of Puerto Williams for birdwatching

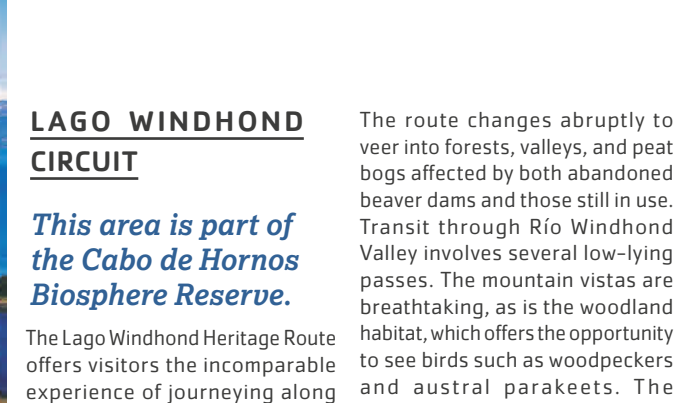


Tips

The challenges of these routes make it advisable to travel with a local guide, who can also advise on the essential equipment for the journey, such as layers of thermal and waterproof clothing, hiking boots, sunglasses with UV protection, sunscreen, 3-season tent, a backpack appropriate for the number of days of travel, -5°C sleeping bag, first aid kit, knowledge of the weather conditions and safety measures. Several of these items can be rented in Puerto Williams, including camp stoves, mattresses, and tents. The use of a GPS, compass, topographical guide and/or map is recommended, to help one navigate should any of the markers along the trail be missing.

Between November and March, one may encounter snow and bad weather. Outside of these months, not only is the hill hostile, but accessing Isla Navarino becomes quite difficult.

Do not drink water without making it potable: the use of portable systems to make fresh water potable is recommended, since beavers are very common and they contaminate watercourses and streams.



LAGO WINDHOND

CIRCUIT

*This area is part of the Cabo de Hornos Biosphere Reserve.*

The Lago Windhond Heritage Route offers visitors the incomparable experience of journeying along the majestic mountainous skyline of the high Andean habitats, forest ecosystems, and the world's southernmost wetlands, to the inland valleys that cross Isla Navarino from north to south and that blend extensive peat bogs in a horizon invaded by beaver dams. The trail leads to Lago Windhond, an exceptional place for sport fishing. Listed as one of the last 24 most pristine natural areas in the world, the circuit stands out for its contrasting landscapes and biodiversity. The beginning of the trail coincides with the first section of the Dientes de Navarino Route, and then heads towards the southernmost part of the island, crossing valleys, virgin forests, lakes, peat bogs, and beautiful rivers, such as the Róbalo, Windhond and Ukika. Due to its location, the Lago Windhond Heritage Route is probably the highest southern latitude trekking circuit in the world.

The Yaganes were true sea nomads aboard their canoes. The main islands they visited were Hoste, Navarino, Lennox, the islands of the Archipiélago Wollaston, and Tierra del Fuego. They came together and formed the first settlements in Caleta Mejillones, Yendegaia and Ushuaia, in Tierra del Fuego.

The Yaganes developed social practices and efficient material technology to inhabit their surroundings. An example of this was the

Tourist Attractions Map

Antártica Chilena Province

National Tourism Service I Chile  
Magallanes and Antártica Chilena Region

Free Map

www.patagonia-chile.com



The Polar Commitment

**ANTARCTIC ENVIRONMENTAL CODE OF CONDUCT**  
I shall enjoy the privilege of visiting this pristine continent.  
I shall plan my trip to ensure minimal impact.  
I shall respect special and protected areas, as well as other countries' stations.  
I shall protect wildlife and the environment.  
I shall take all my waste with me.  
I shall avoid all possible personal risks.  
I shall ensure that everyone on my team knows and follows these guidelines.

All visits to Antarctica must be carried out in accordance with the Antarctic Treaty and its Protocol on Environmental Protection.

The only authority empowered to approve visits for scientific purposes is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Chilean Antarctic Institute, INACH).

INACH: The Chilean Antarctic Institute was founded in 1964 for the purpose of contributing to scientific research on the Antarctic continent, as part of the agreements reached during the International Geophysical Year.

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www.leonmonte.cl

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LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLES

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find (fossils, plants, etc)
- Minimize campfire impacts (be careful with fire)
- Respect wildlife
- Be considerate of other visitors



DIENTES DE NAVARINO

*The southernmost trekking circuit in the world.*

The first Heritage Route of the program created by the Ministry of National Assets was launched on Isla Navarino in 2001. It seeks to recognize, value, and make available to people the heritage of the diversity of territories and

ways of living in Chile. The roads and trails of Isla Navarino, declared by UNESCO in 2005 as part of the Biosphere Reserve of Cabo de Hornos, are a unique journey at the edge of the world and the American continent. Its trails tread an imposing geology carved out by glaciers over two million years, a dismembered landscape where sea and land meet at the crossroads of the Pacific, Atlantic, and Antarctic oceans.

Dientes de Navarino Heritage Route is a 4 to 5 day trip that crosses the Dientes de Navarino

mountain range, passing through Magellanic forests of lengas, Magellan's beech, Antarctic beech, and canelos, among others, hidden lagoons, and unforgettable panoramic views. The full circuit is physically and technically demanding, recommended only for experienced explorers or with the help of a local guide, while the first section, which covers Cerro La Bandera, can be visited as a day trip with no major requirements or preparation.

This area's biodiversity area has sparked national and international

interest in exploring and experiencing the trails that penetrate this landscape, in which marine and inland environments intersect. It is easy to imagine the sequence of human history at high latitudes and marvel at ancestral ways of life.

**Difficulty:** High  
**Distance:** Approximately 50 km  
**Notes:** Uneven terrain with rapidly shifting weather conditions.  
**Responsible Camping:** Bring a camp stove, remove all trash, and protect water sources. Campfires are not allowed.