

Two Oceans And One Road Ruled By The Wind

After detouring from the Carretera Austral, in Chile, we headed toward Chile Chico, the small border crossing where our Patagonia zigzag would officially begin. The plan is simple: cross into Argentina, weave back and forth between the two countries, and eventually return to La Carretera.



The road to Chile Chico was astonishing. Below us stretched Lago General Carrera, known as Lago Buenos Aires on the Argentine side, its vast blue surface flowing quietly between two nations. The road clung to cliffs above the water, narrow and winding, each curve revealing jagged rock, green slopes, snow-dusted peaks, and distant glaciers. There, we ran into the Californians we first met in Barichara. We have continued to be in the same corners of the map, repeatedly spotting them and their Jeep. It has become clear that we are not just traveling the same trajectory but have many things in common.

At one bend we spotted a small cove with a creek and decided it would be home for the night. Just the Three Musketeers, the sound of water over rocks, and a rugged snow-covered peak decorating our “hotel room.” Scott tried his luck fishing. The fish declined, so steak and onion soup from our TL kitchen became dinner.

The next morning, we crossed into Argentina. The process was straightforward, though our welcome came with Patagonia’s version of cold. The officer was not exactly warm. Fortunately, the human chill did not last.

After a night in Gobernador Gregores, we arrived in El Chaltén, high on our must-see list – famous for the mountains of Fitz Roy and Cerro Torre, two of the most iconic and dramatic granite spires on earth. El Chaltén greeted us with rain and low gray clouds. The mountains hid almost entirely.

Our small hotel was run by an older couple, and that evening we found an excellent Argentinian meal to forget that El Chaltén greeted us with a cold wind. We had booked only two nights, knowing how unpredictable Patagonia can be: you do not schedule the mountains, you wait for them to fit you into their unpredictable schedule after wind approval.



Luckily, the next day the clouds began to loosen their grip. We stopped by the visitor center to ask about trail conditions and forecasts. From the mirador, we finally caught glimpses of Mount Fitz Roy and Cerro Torre, their peaks drifting in and out of clouds, teasing us with every movement of the wind. And then, a condor appeared, gliding against Fitz Roy. Seeing that massive wingspan carving through the Patagonian sky felt like one of those views you think you can only witness while watching Planet Earth.

The following morning Patagonia rewarded our patience. A flawless blue sky. Not a cloud in sight. We set out for Laguna Torre beneath Cerro Torre. What was meant to be a nine-kilometer hike (5.6 miles) turned into ten and a half kilometers (6.5 miles) one way. We have concluded that Argentina must have invented its own metric system. By the time we reached Laguna Torre, any distance discrepancy quickly faded as we watched icebergs floating in the lake below Cerro Torre’s sharp silhouette. We stayed nearly two hours, saying little, simply absorbing the silence and the scale of it all.



The round trip totaled twenty-two kilometers (13.7 miles). Four extra kilometers (2.5 miles) do not sound like much, but the body keeps count. We earned our pizza that night!



The blue sky returned the next morning, so we stayed. When Patagonia offers a clear invitation, you accept. We hiked toward Fitz Roy, reaching Laguna Capri under another almost cloudless sky. At one point a condor swooped directly overhead, close enough to hear the rush of air beneath its wings. It passed above us in a single powerful glide, a whoosh so close that left us standing simply stunned and speechless by the experience. At Laguna Capri we spent hours watching Fitz Roy fully exposed against the clear blue sky. Check out our YouTube video [El Chalten](#).

From there we drove to El Calafate to see Perito Moreno Glacier. Even under shifting clouds, the glacier mesmerized. Cracking ice, blue walls rising from the water, nature performing without rehearsal, and the wind directing the show. The next day we boarded a boat across Lago Argentino to see Spegazzini and Upsala glaciers, passing icebergs sculpted like oversized blue meringues crafted by a talented chef with the color blue in mind. Check out our YouTube Video [El Calafate](#).



After a few days in El Calafate, to include Valentine's Day celebrated with glacier ice cocktails, we drove toward the Río Guillermo/Dorotea crossing for our first zigzag back into Chile. The crossing was the easiest yet. The customs officer barely inspected the car and even offered tips for the route that would eventually lead us to the end of the world.

Before heading deeper south, we spent a few days in Puerto Natales, a staging ground for wilderness filled with backpackers and hitchhikers, which annoyed us a bit.



There we first encountered representations of the Selk'nam people, Indigenous inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego. Their ceremonial body paint, white lines and geometric patterns in red and black, appear in statues throughout town.

Learning about the Selk'nam led us to Tierra del Fuego itself. The archipelago begins just south of the Strait of Magellan, where mainland South America fractures into wind-swept islands. Its name, "Land of Fire," was given in 1520 by the Portuguese Explorer, Ferdinand Magellan, who saw Indigenous fires burning along the shore as he passed through the strait that now bears his name.

The irony doesn't go unnoticed: even in summer, this land of "fuego" is cold. The wind cuts through layers, and the deceptive sun does not guarantee warmth.

After a few days in Puerto Natales, we drove toward Torres del Paine, another highly anticipated location. It was one of those beautiful sunny days, but the wind had other plans. It was blowing nearly as hard as the winds we experienced during our first hurricane in Florida in 2022. As we approached the park, the Paine Torres (towers) and Paine Cuernos (horns) began to rise on the horizon, growing larger with every mile.

On the way to the park entrance, we stopped at a viewpoint to admire the rugged mountains. Because of the wind, we stayed inside Taco Libre and felt him rocking back and forth, either from the gusts or perhaps from a desire to dance. Mafe's Chikito, the Mazda Miata, would have lifted off like Mary Poppins with that wind. We did not attempt to have E.T., our drone, capture the moment. He may have phoned home permanently.

Inside the park, signs warned of winds over 80 kilometers per hour (50 miles per hour). The road to Mirador Los Cuernos was closed to cars, turning a five-kilometer hike into seven. Hiking into a headwind makes one kilometer feel like two or three. The wind does not simply push, it rocks you, some may think you are inebriated!

With car restrictions, the trail was nearly empty. We first stopped at the Paine River waterfall, surging at 100 cubic meters per second. Mist twisted sideways in the wind, like Oklahoma tornadoes, and the water carried that luminous blue that keeps reappearing in Patagonia. Speaking of blue, the name "Paine," from the Tehuelche Indigenous language, means "blue."



At the mirador facing the Cuernos del Paine, we had the site and the view entirely to ourselves. The horns rose sharply against the sky, and we stood for nearly an hour, bracing against gusts, grateful for rare solitude, and watching the wind move some clouds but not all.



That night the wind intensified further. The next day the weather refused to cooperate for the main hike to the base of Cerro Torre, reminding us who sets the rules. Instead, we hiked to Lago Gray, where the immense wall of Grey Glacier glowed in different shades of blue. Not to fret Cerro Torre, we will return to Torres del Paine on our way north.



From there we drove south to Punta Arenas along the Strait of Magellan, on the Ruta del Fin del Mundo, the *End of the World Route*, the historic passage connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The horizon felt wide and open, the cold air a steady reminder of how far south we had come and how close Antarctica lies.



Sunny days did not equal warmth. Even in summer temperatures hover between 48 and 60 degrees Fahrenheit, and windchill lowers the number quickly. As a result, layers of clothing in Patagonia are your friend and remind you that you do not dress for fashion, you dress for survival. Consequently, you may occasionally look like a clown with the variety of colors in your many layers of clothing.

In Punta Arenas we visited the Monumento al Pingüino – we took a boat to see Magellanic penguins. Dolphins surfaced along the way, and sea lions lounged on buoys.

After a few days, we boarded the ferry to Porvenir, a quiet town along the Strait and our base for visiting king penguins.

Porvenir in Spanish means “the future,” yet the town feels suspended in time. A little worn, a little forgotten, as if it is perpetually waiting for something (the future) to arrive. We explored the vast yellow plains beyond town without encountering another car. Guanacos here reacted differently. Unlike in other areas where they appear to not be bothered by cars, here, at the distant hum of our engine they stiffened and bolted.

We also spotted a culpeo, the Patagonian fox, although it is more closely related to the wolf. Seeing it in that vastness, under clear skies, with no other cars or people in sight, felt like Patagonia was giving us at that moment of wild remoteness we had been dreaming of since we embarked in this adventure.

With little else to do in Porvenir, we watched Casablanca. Others may always have Paris, we will always have Porvenir.

The next day we visited a king penguin colony and even spotted a whale along the way. By now we had met three species: the Magellanic penguins waddling with determination, the Humboldt penguins loud and animated, and the King penguins, taller with orange and yellow markings, carrying themselves with calm authority knowing they are the rulers of the land. An observation: King penguins, unlike the other two, do not mate for life. Even in the penguin world, commitment varies.



Following the advice of the helpful customs officer in Chile, we detoured deeper into Chilean Tierra del Fuego toward Karukinka Natural Park before crossing to Argentina.

Karukinka is vast and dramatic. You drive through wide open valleys where the land stretches endlessly, and then without warning, dense forests appear. The trees grow so closely with a mysterious vibe that you cannot help but think of childhood storybooks. We did not encounter any wolves stepping out from behind a tree, like Little Red Ridding Hood, but we did come across foxes and many guanacos with their offspring.

In Karukinka, we reached the end of the road in Chilean Tierra del Fuego and camped alone by a river, surrounded by calafate bushes loaded with berries. Naturally, we made calafate drinks, leaning into the legend that whoever eats calafate is destined to return.

When we arrived at the park, clouds concealed the mountains in a quiet game of hide and seek. It felt like a quiet contest between mountains that wanted to be seen and clouds that insisted on covering them. The wind appointed itself referee and kept the outcome unpredictable. There was light rain, heavy rain, shifting light, more wind, and then it was time to sleep beside the river.



We woke to sunlight, mostly clear skies as if most of the clouds had continued their own journey. The mountains stood fully revealed with layers of green, brown, reddish orange and some of the higher peaks decorated with patches of snow. From there we crossed once more into Argentina with no delays. The landscape shifted into open plains, then gradually mountains reappeared as we continued toward Ushuaia.

As we approached Ushuaia, the mountains arose abruptly. The road curved along the water before climbing toward town. For those of us who love winding roads, it was the perfect approach to the end of the world. The imposing mountains announced themselves before the city sign did.

Seeing the sign marking the southernmost city in the world felt like a dream realized. Ushuaia sits on Isla Grande de Tierra del Fuego, separated from mainland South America and bordered by the Beagle Channel. Like Hawaii in North America, it belongs to the continent politically, but not physically.

All of a sudden, we realized that in the morning we were still by the Pacific Ocean in Chile, and by afternoon, in Ushuaia, Argentina, we were standing by the Atlantic. Two oceans, one relatively short drive.

That evening we celebrated with fresh local king crab. Our reserved table was not ready, so we waited at the bar with an appetizer and aperitif. When we asked to transfer the tab to our table, the waiter smiled and told us it was on the house for the inconvenience.

A small, unexpected, and generous gesture at the edge of the continent.

We have reached the end of the world, but not the adventure. Whether we have reached the end of the road remains to be seen.

March 2, 2026

