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# LUXURY

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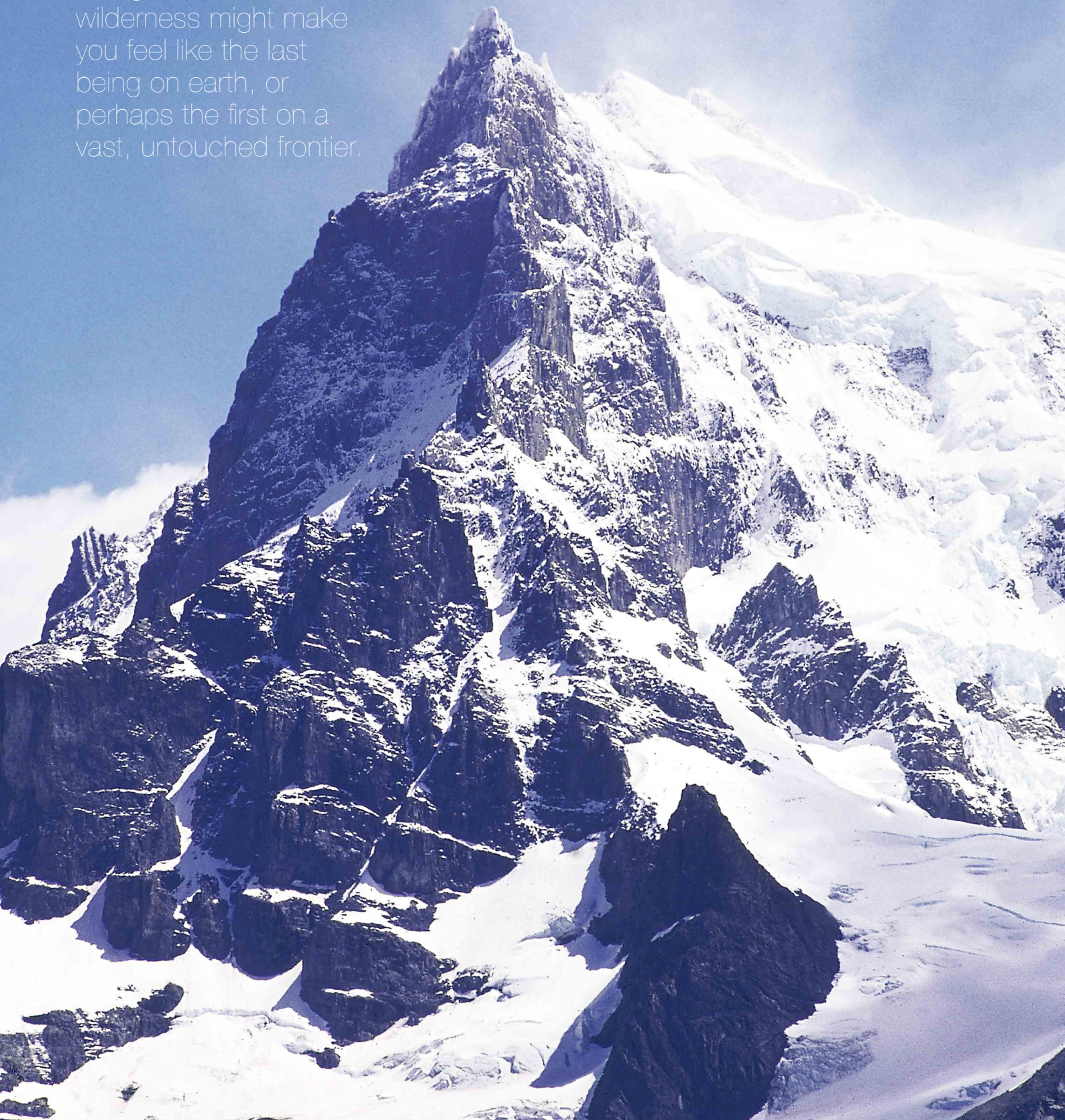
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FEATURE - DESTINATION

# The Lost World

Patagonia's immense wilderness might make you feel like the last being on earth, or perhaps the first on a vast, untouched frontier.







*Above:* Intricate marble stone formations are carved from millenia of erosion.

**P**atagonia has a seductive power; and it can't just be reduced simply to breathtaking views. Perhaps it's the vastness, the Tolkien-esque richness that pulls visitors in; the sense that you have entered another world and may not be able to find your way out. Verdant plains roll gently towards jagged, snow-capped spires; rushing white-water rivers flow into impossibly serene turquoise lakes – the region is awash with beautiful severities.

The region, divided between

the Chilean west and Argentine east, boasts what is perhaps an overabundance of things to explore for travelers. Because of its positioning deep in the southern hemisphere, December through April is the best time to visit while the weather is mild the skies are clear of rain. During this time, guests can enjoy helicopter rides over the Andes Mountains, kayaking in the region's many lakes and streams, ice-trekking, motorcycling, or generally indulging with incredible food and wine while taking in unforgettable views.





*Top left:* An ice-trekker uses special traction devices for exploring the glaciers. *Below right:* The thermal pools at Puyuhuapi Lodge and Spa. *Center right and bottom left:* Dramatic scenery reigns in Torres del Paine National Park.



## What to Do

The **Perito Moreno Glacier** is a must-see in Patagonia; the 250-square-kilometer ice formation is the world's third largest reserve of freshwater and continues to grow. Located in Los Glaciares National Park, the gargantuan area is 170 meters thick, towering 74 meters above the freezing water below. **Ice-trekking tours** have gained popularity with visitors; make sure to wear crampons, traction devices that attach to hiking boots to help hikers remain stable on the slippery and treacherous ice. If you are able to arrive early enough, try to catch a **glacier sunrise** at dawn, said to be one of the most heavenly experiences in the region.





Above: Whale-watching is a popular Patagonia pastime.

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Lovers of wildlife will be delighted by the abundance of whales near the peninsula in wintertime; the resort village of Puerto Piramides is a great location to arrange a **whale-watching expedition** for the day using small boats. Spectators can watch in awe as the massive mammals breach above the water, casting enormous sprays of white water in all directions. Whales are so loved by the tiny port village's residents that frequent visitors

are named and baptized. Animal lovers can also check out **Ushuaia**, a funky town that is commonly considered the southernmost city in the world and is home to **penguins**, seals, and many local birds. If you check out the Isla de los Estados nearby, check out the **Faro del Fin del Mundo** (“lighthouse at the end of the world”), the structure that inspired famed author Jules Verne to write a novel of the same name.



*Top:* Hiking provides unbeatable views. *Left:* A glacier expedition gives an up-close-and-personal look at Patagonia's giant ice formations. *Bottom right:* Seafood melds with fruit at Afrigonia.



**Torres del Paine National Park** is another must-see that highlights the region's breathtaking natural beauty: snow-capped mountains and granite spires contrast with verdant fields of tall grasses and wildflowers; lakes and rivers allow local wildlife to thrive. **Cougars, condors, and pumas** roam through the park, as well as more endangered species like the Chilean Huemul. Hikers generally take between five and nine days to see the area, stopping to rest at designated

**campsites** throughout the park. The Salto Grande waterfall is located in the park and is extremely powerful, releasing an unfathomable amount of water every second. Walk (carefully) up to the very edge if you dare! Urbanites and motoring enthusiasts can take a **motorcycle tour** through the region's winding roads. From the straits of Magellan to Tierra del Fuego to Ushuaia, riders can stop for photography, **gaucho-style cook-outs**, and stops at hosterias and touristic sites to recharge.

When it's time to come home, don't forget to go shopping for souvenirs for your friends and loved ones. Everyone is sure to be delighted by mouthwatering local delicacies; take home **local chocolates** in unique flavors like calafate from chocolatiers like Ovejitas de la Patagonia. Hand-woven goods like sweaters and throw blankets are great as winter holiday gifts and are unbelievably cozy; pair the gift with a gourd and drinking straw for mate, a strong local tea blend.





*Top left:* Mouthwatering delicacies at fusion restaurant Afrigonia.  
*Top right:* Cervecería Baguales serves up the finest microbrews in the country.

## Where to Eat

If you're tired out by local cuisine and would like to try something a bit wild, Puerto Natales' **Afrigonia** is just what the doctor ordered. The Patagonian-Zambian fusion restaurant is the brainchild of cute couple/restaurant owners Kamal Nawaz and Nathalie Reffer, who fell in love in Africa and returned to Chile five years ago to open the venue. Try the scallop curry, made from local organic ingredients and seafood from artisan fishermen. While you're in the neighborhood, grab a drink at **Cervecería Baguales**. The outdoor atrium features a fire pit, and the microbrews are some of the best in the entire region. Late at night, the brewery is buzzing with music and the chatter of locals and travelers alike.

Insatiable carnivores will be overwhelmed with mouthwatering meat options in Patagonia. For travelers in El Calafate, the exceedingly popular **La Tablita** offers Hulk-sized portions of steak and spit-roasted lamb served with garlic papas fritas and salads. **Don Pichon**, located on a little hill that provides great views of the evergreen forest

and mountains beyond, offers what are arguably the best lamb chops in the country: tender, juicy, and rich with flavor. An elegant nighttime option is **Patagonia Beef and Wine Restaurant**, a traditional Argentinean venue that offers carefully-selected Spanish and local wines alongside pristine cuts of meat. Start out with flavorful tapas with friends, and be sure to finish with the chef's celebrated artisanal desserts.

Vegetarians will find **El Living** a delicious option; toasted mozzarella sandwiches, marinated eggplant bruschetta, guacamole, and crepes are made with locally-grown produce, contributing to the restaurant's "green" atmosphere. Eat inside, where the décor is funky and casual, or grab your jacket and relax outside, where the backyard is full of fruit trees and picnic tables for alfresco dining. Non-meat eaters aren't the only people welcome here – there are also **vegan, dairy-free, and gluten-free** meals for travelers with specific diets.

If you're jonesing for some Patagonia wine (the region is famous

for its Pinots), the **Bodega Del Fin Del Mundo** is a must-see. The vineyard stretches over 870 hectares and produces Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Malbec, Chardonnay, and Cabernet Franc, as well as less-common types like Viognier and Tannat. The winery is available for guided visits and **wine tasting sessions** for oenophiles.

For those who are interested in indulging during their time in Patagonia, **Liz Caskey Culinary & Wine Experiences** is an essential resource for discerning travelers. The company is a boutique luxury travel firm that carefully plans bespoke journeys that allow travelers to explore the connections between fine dishes and the rich cultures and environmental landscapes that produce them. The options for luxury travelers are limitless: **fly fishing, service staff, lavish private parties, and personal helicopter rides** are just a few things that you can plan. If the trip leaves your appetite ever-growing, the company can also create tailor-made tours in Uruguay and Peru as well.



*Top center:* The cabin-like exterior of Puyuhuapi Lodge and Spa. *Bottom right:* Patagonia Camp's signature yurts are pure bohemian elegance.

## Where to Stay

**Patagonia Camp** is the first hotel in the “green luxury camp” category in the region. The space is built to minimize each guest’s environmental impact and to architecturally blend seamlessly into the landscape surrounding it, utilizing stilts and platforms, yurts, communal areas, and plenty of green space.

Water is filtered and re-used and clean energy minimizes CO2 emissions while using appliances. The vibe of the camp is serene and bohemian; perfect for the traveler that needs to get away for a day. For more Zen, try **Puyuhuapi Lodge and Spa**, which offers thermal pools, deeply-penetrating massages, seaweed wraps, and other indulgent treatments to soothe your aching muscles.

Those with artistic inclinations will appreciate **Arrebol Patagonia Hotel**, which hosts an annual **art exhibition** of local painters and sculptors. The space itself also boasts an artistic feel;



rough cuts of wood in varying shades form a patchwork on the space’s exterior, while nature is brought within with gnarled branches along the stairwells. Sculptures and other mediums of art fill the hotel’s common spaces, giving the venue a boutique feel that luxury travelers seek.

Couples can enjoy a luxurious and romantic stay in the wilderness at **Eolo**, a 10,000-acre estancia in

El Calafate that overlooks the stone steppe and **Lago Argentino**. The lodge has luxe rooms with huge windows that give you gorgeous panoramic views and interesting indoor activities like storytellers that weave tales of local **indigenous legends** and **glaciology discussions**. Lovers can arrange a **star-gazing trip** to observe constellations using the hotel’s telescopes. 🌌