

Tierra del Fuego



A storied past of shipwrecks, failed religious missions and indigenous extinction contributes to the powerful mystique of this end-of-the-earth location. Travelers flock here to glimpse the furthest reaches of the continent, and ah – what a view it is! The barren northern plains of Tierra del Fuego give way to peat bogs and moss-draped lenga forests that rise into ragged snowy mountains. At Ushuaia, the Andes meet the southern ocean in a sharp skid, making way for the city before reaching a sea of lapping currents.

While assuming a complex and sometimes conflicted identity, Tierra del Fuego still manages to remain beautiful, ancient and strange. The curved bandera tree, waving like a hankie, is a reminder that it's the toying weather that defines this place and most travelers' visits to it.

While it is isolated and hard to reach, Tierra del Fuego is by no means cut off from the mainland. Ports bustle with commerce, oil refineries chug and adventure seekers descend in droves to fly-fish, hike and start Antarctic cruises. Separated from the mainland by the Strait of Magellan, this archipelago shared with Chile is comprised of one large island, Isla Grande de Tierra del Fuego, and many smaller ones, most of them uninhabited. This chapter covers both the Argentine and Chilean sections of the territory, including Chile's Isla Navarino.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Kayak alongside sea lions in the gunmetal-gray waters of the **Beagle Channel** (p522)
- Speed through frozen valleys on a **dogsledding tour** (p522) near Ushuaia
- Round up the sheep on a working **estancia** (p516) around Río Grande
- Relive grim times in Ushuaia's once-isolated prison turned museum, **Museo Marítimo & Museo del Presidio** (p520)
- Explore the ancient Fuegian forests in **Parque Nacional Tierra del Fuego** (p528)



■ POPULATION: 106,000 (INCL CHILE)

■ AREA: 47,992 SQ KM (ISLA GRANDE)

