



# Patagonia

## Includes »

Puerto Madryn .....	383
The Falkland Islands ....	413
Parque Nacional	
Perito Moreno .....	428
El Chaltén .....	429
Parque Nacional	
Los Glaciares (North) ..	434
El Calafate .....	440
Parque Nacional	
Los Glaciares (South) ..	446
Punta Arenas.....	450
Parque Nacional	
Torres del Paine.....	462

## Best Places to Eat

- » Pura Vida (p444)
- » Patagonia Resto-Bar (p387)
- » Afrigonia (p459)
- » La Tablita (p444)
- » El Muro (p433)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Bahía Bustamante (p428)
- » Del Nomade Hostería Ecologica (p391)
- » La Tosca (p386)
- » Tierra Patagonia (p468)
- » Nothofagus B&B (p431)

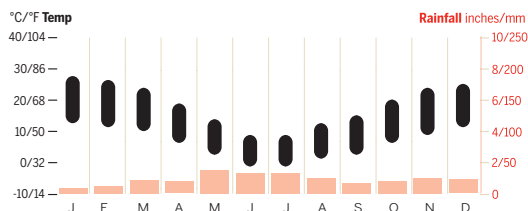
## Why Go?

On South America's southern frontier, nature grows wild, barren and beautiful. Spaces are large, as are the silences that fill them. For the newly arrived, such emptiness can be as impressive as the sight of Patagonia's jagged peaks, pristine rivers and dusty backwater oases. In its enormous scale, Patagonia offers an innumerable wealth of potential experiences and landscapes.

Though no longer a dirt road, lonely Ruta Nacional 40 (RN 40) remains the iconic highway that stirred affection in personalities as disparate as Butch Cassidy and Bruce Chatwin. On the eastern seaboard, paved RN 3 shoots south, connecting oil boomtowns with ancient petrified forests, Welsh settlements and the incredible Península Valdés. Then there is the other, trendy Patagonia where faux-fur hoodies outnumber the guanacos. Don't miss the spectacular sights of El Calafate and El Chaltén, but remember that they're a world apart from the solitude of the steppe.

## When to Go

### El Calafate



**Nov–Mar** Warmest months, ideal for *estancia* visits and driving Ruta 40.

**Jun–mid-Dec** Right whales migrate to Península Valdez.

**mid-Sep–early Mar** Coastal fauna, including penguins, marine birds and sea lions, abounds.

## National Parks & Reserves

Patagonia's national parks boast diverse landscapes, solitude and incredible wildlife. There are the coastal treasures of Monte León (p410) and the newly designated Isla Pingüino (p407), the ancient forests of Los Alerces (p422), the raw beauty of Perito Moreno (p428), and the dazzling glaciers and peaks of Los Glaciares (p434). Note-worthy Chilean parks included here are Torres del Paine (p462), remote Bernardo O'Higgins (p461) and the paleolithic Pali Aike (p456). Among Patagonia's world-class natural reserves, Península Valdés (p389) ranks at the top. Whatever you do, don't leave this region without setting foot in at least a couple.

### **i** Getting There & Around

Patagonia is synonymous with unmaintained *ripio* (gravel) roads, missing transport links and interminable bus rides. Flights, though expensive, connect the highlights. Before skimming on your transport budget, bear in mind that the region comprises a third of the world's eighth-largest country.

If you're bussing it along the eastern seaboard, note that schedules are based on the demands of Buenos Aires, with arrivals and departures frequently occurring in the dead of night. Off-season transport options are greatly reduced. In high season demand is high – buy tickets as far in advance as possible. For information on transport with tour operators along RN 40, see p417

## COASTAL PATAGONIA

Patagonia's cavorting right whales, penguin colonies and traditional Welsh settlements are all accessed by Argentina's coastal RN 3. While this paved road takes in some fascinating maritime history, it also travels long yawning stretches of landscape that blur the horizon like a never-ending blank slate. It's also a favored travel route for oversized trucks on long-haul trips.

Wildlife enthusiasts shouldn't miss the world-renowned Península Valdés, the continent's largest Magellanic penguin colonies at Área Natural Protegida Punta Tombo, and Ría Deseado's diverse seabird population. The quiet villages of Puerto San Julián and Camarones make for quiet seaside retreats, while Gaiman tells the story of Welsh settlement through a lazy afternoon of tea and cakes.

## Viedma

📍02920 / POP 53,000

Sharing the lush Río Negro with sister city Carmen de Patagones, Viedma is comparatively bustling and prosperous. For travelers, the capital of Río Negro province is a less picturesque but more convenient base with good services and amenities, an attractive riverfront, upscale cafes and a jogging path close to downtown.

In 1779 Francisco de Viedma put ashore to found the city after his men started dying of fever and thirst at Península Valdés. In 1879 it became the residence of the governor of Patagonia and the political locus of the country's enormous southern territory. A century later, the radical Alfonsín administration proposed moving the federal capital here from Buenos Aires but was crushingly defeated.

### **👁** Sights & Activities

Launch operators at the pier offer kayak rentals and river cruises on the Río Negro. The season for sport fishing runs from November to early July, with rainbow trout (catch and release), silverside and carp.

#### **FREE** Museo Cardenal Cagliero MUSEUM

(📍02920-15-308671; Rivadavia 34; 🕒8am-1pm Mon-Fri) This Salesian museum features incredible ceiling paintings and a neat fish-vertebrae cane (check out the cardinal's office). It's housed in the Centro Histórico Cultural Salesiano, the former Vicariato de la Patagonia, a massive 1890 brick structure on the corner of Colón.

#### **FREE** Museo Gobernador MUSEUM

Eugenio Tello (📍425900; San Martín 263; 🕒9am-4:30pm Mon-Fri, 4-6pm Sat) Displays on European settlement, Tehuelche tools, artifacts, deformed skulls and skeletons.

### **🌟** Festivals

**Regata del Río Negro** FESTIVAL  
(www.regatadelrionegro.com.ar; 🕒mid-January) A week of events including the world's longest kayak race, a 500km paddle from Neuquén to Viedma.

**Fiesta del Siete de Marzo** FESTIVAL  
(Carmen de Patagones; 🕒early March) Celebration marking the 1827 underdog triumph of Carmen de Patagones over better-equipped