



Northern Patagonia

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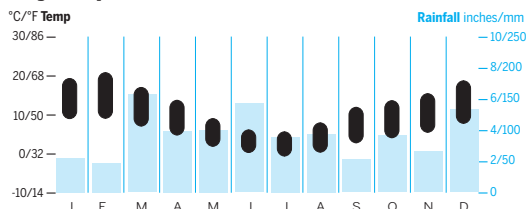
Why Go?

For a century, Northern Patagonia has been the most rugged and remote part of continental Chile, the place where scant pioneers quietly set forth a Wild West existence. While life here may be tough for its residents, it doesn't lack for scenery. Exuberant rainforest, scrubby steppe and unclimbed peaks crowd the horizon, but the essence of this place is water, from the clear cascading rivers to the turquoise lakes, massive glaciers and labyrinthine fjords. Southbound visitors often bypass Northern Patagonia on a sprint to Torres del Paine, but its backcountry treasures are pay dirt to the adventurous traveler. With the construction of dams and high-tension towers imminent, many feel that the time to see this virgin region is now.

With a few ferry interruptions, the gravel Carretera Austral rumbles from Puerto Montt to Villa O'Higgins, some 1200km south. This chapter runs north to south, from Hornopirén to Villa O'Higgins.

When to Go

Coyhaique



Nov-Mar
Warmest months with best bus connections on the Carretera Austral.

Feb Festival Costumbrista celebrates pioneer culture with parties in most small towns.

Jul-Aug Blue-sky days around Coyhaique, with nearby skiing and snowshoeing.

Northern Patagonia Highlights

- 1 Explore the misty fjords and trek the temperate rainforests of **Parque Pumalín** (p310)
- 2 Pedal or drive past farms, rushing rivers and hanging glaciers while tracing the length of the mythic **Carretera Austral** (p309)
- 3 Giddy-up into pioneer **Patagonia** (p316) on remote Andean trails
- 4 Face a whirl of white water, rafting the world-class rapids of **Río Futaleufú** (p314)
- 5 Lose track of time dallying in cool **Calaleta Tortel** (p335), a seaside village set on boardwalks

