

## Southern Chile

### A Greentours Itinerary

#### Days 1 & 2 UK to Curico in Chile

After our flight to the Chilean capital Santiago we'll drive south into the fertile heartland of the country with its many vineyards and farms where Southern Lapwings patrol the fields and introduced California Quails scuttle across the road.

#### Days 3 - 8 Central Valley – Siete Tazas and Laguna de Laja

The remarkable waterfalls and lush southern beech forests of Radal Siete Tazas provide an early opportunity to see some of the fabulous Chilean flora with shrubby *Calceolaria meyeriana*, bushes of long-tubed *Fabiana imbricate*, stands of the golden orchid *Chloraea cristata* and the bizarre *Chloraea nudilabia*. Birdlife is varied too with Patagonian Sierra Finch, Tufted Tit-tyrant and Spine-tailed Rayadito whilst the calls of Chucucu Tapaculos will have us searching the dense shrubberies as dapper green lizards scuttle up tree trunks. The monkey puzzle forests of Nahuelbuta are quite simply extraordinary with thousands of towering lichen-clad trunks sporting spidery whorls of spiny branches. Austral Parakeets are commonly seen feeding on the huge cones and male Magellanic Woodpeckers with their bright red heads hammer the rotting trunks beneath which grow orange *Berberis linearifolia*, the yellow-tipped red tubes of *Desfontainea spinosa*, creamy white *Drimys winteri* (formerly used to prevent scurvy) and meadows of white *Chloraea lechleri* and mauve *Herbetia lahue*. Roadside stops will add to our haul of orchids with tall *Chloraea chrysantha* and *Chloraea virescens* and the pretty *Jovellana punctata* as we make our way to the remarkable volcanic landscapes of Laguna del Laja, whose raw cinder slopes harbour the tight rosettes of *Viola vulcanica*.

#### Days 9-12 Chilean Lake District – Villarica and Conguillo National Parks

Continuing south we'll stay a night on the Pacific Coast and then visit the bird rich wetlands of Lago Budi whose marshes are home to Many-coloured Rush-Tyrant, Wren-like Rushbird, many ducks, and handsome Great Grebes. Stands of golden-yellow *Alstroemeria ligtu* line the roadsides along with tall *Lobelia tupa* and introduced tree lupins. A relative of the former smothers the forest floor at Conguillo and although it will be too early for blooms of this species the higher volcanic slopes here have a superb population of *Viola cotyledon* in a variety of mauves and purples. These gorgeous flowers make a perfect picture framed against a backdrop of the majestic snowy cone of active Volcan Llaima, this flanked with architectural monkey puzzles and the tall pink trumpets of *Rhodophiala andina*. Andean Condors are sometimes seen cruising the thermals and nearby marshes are home to Black-faced Ibises and the handsome

Spectacled Tyrants whose wonderful bouncing display flight is a joy to watch. The stunning Volcan Villarica forms a dramatic background to the town of Pucon from where we'll strike out for Heurquehue, with stunning bushes of *Embothrium coccineum*, yellow *Azara serrata* and golden *Berberis darwinii* whilst the ground is covered with the white blooms of dog orchid *Codorchis lessonii* and deep red *Ourisia coccinea*. Among the leaf-litter are superbly-camouflaged Darwin's Frogs. Close to the Argentine border yet another majestic cone, Volcan Lanin, towers above the most southerly *Araucaria araucana* forests. Ruddy-headed Geese lead their goslings along the shores of nearby lakes. The beautiful spires of *Gavilea odoratissima* are mingled with Crazy Porcelain Orchid and more dazzling firebushes as Magellanic Tapaculos zip about the dense bamboo brakes and Striped Woodpeckers feed unobtrusively on deadwood as we walk alongside a stream flanked by scarlet *Ourisia ruelloides*.

### **Days 13 – 15(am)**

#### **Valdivian Rainforests & Laguna de Maule**

As we travel south the landscape becomes blanketed in the unique Valdivian temperate rainforests filled with many new plants including the crimson lanterns of *Crinodendron hookerianum*, scented myrtles, huge bushes of *Fuchsia magellanica*, the stately crinkled leaves of *Gunnera tinctoria*, epiphytic *Luzuriaga polyphylla* and the towering alerces *Fitzroya cupressoides*, relatives of the redwoods, with some specimens over a thousand-years old. These dense forests are also the best place to see two of Chile's more elusive birds the Chucaco Tapaculo and the Black-throated Huet-huet, both handsome skulkers with distinctive far-reaching calls.

Journeying eastwards in to the Andes we'll stop for masses of *Calceolaria thyrsiflorus* and pink-stemmed *Puya caerulea*, as Black-chested Buzzard-eagles soar overhead. We'll see abundant *Mutisia ilicifolia/spinosa* scrambling over shrubberies full of scented *Dioscorea juncea*. Impressive are the masses of showy *Alstroemeria ligtu* and there's nice stands of *Schizanthus hookeri*. Around Laguna de Maule we'll hardly have time to notice the Andean Gulls as we enjoy stunning *Viola glacialis*, *Calceolaria pennellii* and lovely patches of pink *Oxalis adenophylla*. Snow-streaked colourful mountains surround this picturesque lake. Beautifully plumaged Lesser Seedsnipe scurry around with Common Miner and big lizards below slopes with abundant *Calceolaria corymbosa* subspecies *flocosa*. A bare looking gravelly expanse is home to a fantastic colony of *Viola cotyledon* with huge domes smothered in flowers ranging from deep purple, to lilac or white, all with a superb Andean backdrop.

### **Days 15(pm) - 17**

#### **to Santiago and to UK**

We travel back to Santiago in the afternoon of Day 15 and spend the night in the holiday Inn close to the airport. Late in the morning of Day 16 our flights depart Santiago, those flying to Europe arriving Day 17.

## Torres del Paine Extension

### Day 16 to Punta Arenas

From Santiago we'll fly south over the stunning landscapes of southern Patagonia during which we can admire the convoluted fjords, immense glaciers and, depending on the weather, the ragged peaks of the Fitzroy Range in neighbouring Argentina, eventually landing at Punta Arenas. This southern port is surrounded by windswept pampas that is home to stately Darwin's Rheas, the brilliant red-breasted Long-tailed Meadowlark, Ochraceous Ground-Tyrants and rare Ashy-headed Geese. Out in the cold waters of the Straits of Magellan are Kelp Gulls, with diminutive Magellanic Diving Petrels and larger Imperial Cormorants out to sea.

### Days 17-20 Torres del Paine

The impressive landscapes of Chile's flagship national park are also brimming with wildlife and during our three day stay we'll have close views of many Guanacos and Upland Geese, black and tan Austral Negritos and an excellent chance of Andean Condor sightings. There's even the possibility of a Puma, the park supporting healthy populations of these elusive cats. Lovely turquoise lakes stud the park and we'll stay next to Lago Pehoe with amazing views of the granite peaks of the Cuernos del Paine across the waters, the ever-changing Patagonian sky providing a constant scenic delight. The flora is also outstanding with big numbers of *Chloraea magellanica*, yellow *Gavilea lutea*, white *Gavilea araucana* and tall green *Chloraea leptopetala* among billowing masses of *Adesmia corymbosa* and various spectacular *Lathyrus* species. Perhaps the loveliest flower here is the orangey-brown and white *Calceolaria uniflora* the oversized flowers quivering in the brisk Patagonian breeze. The Chilean Firebush also thrives down here along with the tight cushions of white-flowered *Baccharis magellanica*, pretty pink *Escallonia alpina* and pale blue *Perezia recurvata* the latter two growing beside the thundering cascade of Salto Grande. We'll return to Punta Arenas for the evening of Day 20 so as to catch the morning flight to Santiago.

### Day 21 Punta Arenas, Santiago and Departure

We'll catch the morning flight back to Santiago where we'll connect with the early afternoon international departures from there.

### Day 22 Arrive Europe

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