

Southern Chile

A Greentours Itinerary

Day 1 depart Europe

Day 2 To Vilches

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.

We'll be amongst the flora immediately with roadside populations of *Alstroemeria ligtu*, the colours ranging from pink to white. Alongside these will be many lovely *Conanthera bifolia*, deep blue *Pasithea caerulea*, deep pink *Clarkia gayana* and the orange stars of *Haplopappus macrocephalus*. *Nierembergia repens* decorates wet flushes and we'll enjoy the rusty-centred white flowers of *Salpiglossis sinuata* and clambering cerise *Bomarea salsilla*. Orchids are plentiful with a good number of greenish-cream *Chloraea lechleri*, taller white and green *Chloraea galeata* and spikes of golden *Chloraea lamellata*. Handsome male Green-backed Firecrowns will be visiting the hummingbird feeders as we arrive in the Vilches area.

Days 3 & 4 Siete Tazas, Reserva nacional Altos de Lircay & Laguna del Maule

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 imbricata*, 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 Chucau Tapaculos will have us searching the dense shrubberies as dapper green lizards scuttle up tree trunks. *Puya bertroniana* is a fantastic thing, the flower spikes an impressive couple of metres or more, but it is the singular shade of bright turquoise-blue of the blooms that really takes the biscuit. Birds love them too! By cascading rivers and amidst the lovely *Nothofagus* forest we'll find the shrubby *Escallonia rubra* in flower alongside many other beautiful plants such as deep magenta *Lathyrus magellanicus*, dangling red *Tropaeolum tricolor* and *Senna arnotiae*. Rocky places have dainty pink *Calceolaria cana* and barrels of the cactus *Eriosyce curvispina*, lovely *Schizanthus hookeri*, deep pink *Oxalis squammata* and *Calceolaria meyeniana*.

Burrowing Parrots and Chilean Flickers are likely on the way up to Laguna de Maule. Roadside bushes are draped in abundant *Mutisia oligodon* with large white to pink daisy flowers. We'll stop for superb stands of *Alstroemeria ligtu* ssp. *incarnata*, brick-red *Salpiglossis sinuata* and tumbling masses of *Tropaeolum tricolor*.

Hundreds of Silvery Grebes and White-winged Coots inhabit Laguna de Maule. Overhead Andean Condors are soaring – they are quite common here. The surrounding slopes have cushions of *Viola cotyledon* in a variety of colour forms from white to deep purple bloom alongside drifts of *Oxalis adenophylla*. *Cotyledon*'s cousin *Viola glacialis* also blooms here with *Oreopolus glacialis*, *Olsynium oscurum*, pink *Ourisia breviflora* and the pale stars of *Caltha sagittata*. There's also *Mimulus cupreus* as well as *Calceolaria pritchardii* and *Calceolaria filicaulis*, and stands of *Schizanthus hookeri*, big mats of *Oreopolus glacialis* and the peculiar purple 'balls' of *Calceolaria arachnoideum*. Cryptic Grey-throated Seedsnipes can be found here and we'll likely also see Greater Yellowfinches and both Rufous-banded and Common Miners.

Days 5 & 6

Antucalhue & Laguna de Laja

Roadside stops will add to our haul of orchids with *Chloraea stenatha*, green and orange *Chloraea bidentata* and the large lemon-yellow blooms of *Chloraea barbata*, as well as the stunning almost metre tall ivory-flowered *Chloraea crispa*. We'll also see pale pink *Alstroemeria angustifolia* and pretty *Jovellana punctata* as we make our way to the remarkable volcanic landscapes of Laguna del Laja.

The towering 3788-metre cone of Volcan Antuco dominates the landscape surrounding Laguna de Laja. These volcanic slopes are home to billowing masses of *Lathyrus multiceps* and *Vicia nigricans*. The higher we go the more colourful the shows – domes of golden-orange *Senna arnottiana* and many *Calceolaria corymbosa* subsp. *floccosa* all laced together with abundant *Cerastium arvense*. On the inhospitable-looking black ash slopes are fine clumps of *Anemone multifida* and fabulous *Viola congesta* rosettes with white to purple sweetly-scented flowers emerging from the densely-leaved columns. White-browed Ground-tyrant, Rufous-banded Miner and Grey-hooded Sierra-Finch potter amongst the flowers and Andean Gulls patrol the lake shore as we continue to find marvellous flora such as *Gaultheria pumila*, pretty pink *Ourisia microphylla*, clumps of *Calceolaria cavanallesi*, and superb flower studded mats of *Maihuenia poepigii*.

Days 7 & 8

Lago Quillehue & Villarica National park

The stunning Volcan Villarica forms a dramatic background as we encounter our first stately Monkey Puzzles *Araucaria araucana*. Thorn-tailed Rayaditos seem ever-present. Further up we'll have magnificent views of Volcan Lanin framed by impressively large Monkey Puzzles heavily laden with Spanish moss lichen. Ruddy-headed Geese lead their goslings along the shores of nearby lakes. The beautiful spires of *Gavilea odoratissima* are mingled with Crazy Porcelain Orchid *Chloraea magellanica* and more dazzling firebushes as Magellanic Tapaculos zip about the dense bamboo brakes and Striped Woodpeckers feed unobtrusively on dead wood as we walk alongside a stream flanked by scarlet *Ourisia ruelloides*. Austral Parakeets buzz through the monkey puzzles as we admire *Quinchimalium chilense*,

pretty little *Calceolaria tenella*, the shell-like flowers of *Calceolaria valdiviensis*, and the lovely deep pink *Rhodophiala andicola*.

Day 9

Alerce Costero

We'll pass through a transition zone between the Lake District and the Valdivian rainforests of the south. Here the landscape is lit with the stunning bushes of *Embothrium coccineum*, yellow *Azara serrata* and golden *Berberis darwinii*. We'll find pretty white *Luzuriaga radicans* and pink *Campsidium valdivianum* 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. Under immense *Nothofagus dombeyi* and amongst the marbled trunks of *Saxagothaea conspicua* are the dangling ballerinas of *Fuchsia magellanica*.

Bushes of *Latua pubiflora* festooned with purple bells and pink *Campsidium valdivianum* adorn a remarkable forest of dense stands of alerce *Fitzroya cupressoides* (Alerce) and *Saxagothaea conspicua*. We'll see one huge 3500-year old Alerce with an immense twelve metre girth before driving on to Puerto Varas for the night.

Day 10

Alerce Andino NP

The Valdivian rainforest of Alerce Andino must have developed in ideal conditions for the extraordinary lushness is quite overwhelming. Here *Drimys winteri* becomes a towering tree and not a small shrub and the huge rough leaves of *Gunnera tinctoria* reach unimaginable dimensions. The park is named for the tall Alerces which grow here, *Fitzroya cupressoides*, a tree which has been extensively felled for its durable timber. Under stands of this impressive tree are the waxy trumpets of *Philesia magellanica*, dainty *Luzuriaga polyphylla*, lovely red-pink *Asteranthera ovata*, the scarlet tubes of *Sarmienta scandens* and bright orange *Mitraria coccinea*. *Crinodendron hookerianum* is laden with crimson-pink lanterns. Gorgeous Chucaco Tapaculos and Black-throated Huet-huets are charmingly tame when they emerge from the lush understorey in which they normally hide.

Days 11 & 12

Conguillo NP

Stands of golden-yellow *Alstroemeria aurea* line the roadsides along with tall *Lobelia tupa* and introduced tree lupins. We'll pass rivers where we'll look for the striking Torrent Duck as well as Dark-bellied Cinclodes and Austral Negrito. We'll look for the Spectacled Tyrant while Chimango Caracaras and Black-throated Ibises pose on roadside posts. Inside Conguillo National Park many slender beige stems of *Arachnitis uniflora* stand erect of the leaf litter, a most peculiar saprophytic plant. Now we enter an extraordinary world of lava flows and ash cliffs. Great plains of ash (much of it deposited in 2009) have emerald islands

where stands of trees spared by the lava flows, have survived intact. A beautiful blue lake and fabulous stands of *Araucaria araucana* combine to make achingly beautiful landscapes.

The monkey puzzle forests of Conguillio 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 darwinii*, 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*. The orchids get more and more spectacular culminating in one of the most striking of all Chilean orchids, *Chloraea nudilabia*, whose vivid citrus tones look fabulous with the multi-volcano backdrops and the wonderful architectural Monkey Puzzles. The colourful scene continues with stunning blue-and-green lizards sunbathing on dark granite rocks where the colourful Bromeliad *Fascicularia bicolor* forms dense clumps. There's the vivid combination of intense scarlet *Rhodophiala chilensis* and brilliant butter-yellow *Calceolaria corymbosa*. The parasitic shrub *Descumaria mutabilis* hangs from the Monkey Puzzles its flowers opening yellow and aging to red. We'll see pink *Oxalis arenaria*, diminutive *Pinguicula chilensis* and fine drifts of deep blue *Pasithea caerulea*.

Days 13 & 14

To Curico and the Paso Vergara

The Paso Vergara is another high Andean valley. On the way up we'll find flowering *Puya coerulea* on some low cliffs. Here are *Cistanthe grandifolia*, superb clumps of *Mimulus naiandinus* and the rather lovely, pale yellow *Calceolaria paralia*. Further up we'll note Moustached Turcas hopping around the rocks where we'll find orange *Famatina cisandina* and superb stands of *Alstroemeria ligtu* ssp. *incarnata* blooming with *Calceolaria thrysifolia* and dainty *Clarkia tenella*. The glory that is the Long-tailed Meadowlark will no doubt draw our attention from the fabulous flora for a while though soon enough the long stems of golden *Tropaeolum polyphyllum* and lurid pink and orange *Schizanthus grahamii* will wrest our attention back to the flora.

Wetter areas have abundant white *Calandrinia affinis*, rockier places the pretty yellow *Oxalis erythrorhiza*, *Oreopolus glacialis*, pink *Olysinium philipii*, and amazing big cushions of *Azorella monantha* in full flower. Here we'll find the incredible rosettes of *Viola skottsbergiana*.

Day 15

La Parva Ski Resort and to Santiago

Very close to the capital of Santiago one can find snow-capped mountains, indeed just across the border in Argentina towers Aconcagua, South America's highest mountain. La Parva ski station means its easy to get up to these heights! We'll find plenty to make us pause along the road up to the station. There's

Alstroemeria pallida with a horizontal yellow band on the often pink flowers, as well as swathes of cheerful *Tropaeolum sessilifolium*, striking *Puya alpestris*, and *Trichocereus chiloensis*, a columnar cactus.

The slopes around the ski station have many stunning alpine plants, perhaps prize among them, the Rosular Violets. No less than three species can be found here. There's the little cupcakes that are *Viola montagnei*, the little reddish brown rosettes with tiny dark purple flowers arranged in a ring. There's also small *Viola philippii* with pink flowers, and the amazing *Viola atropurpurea*, the most succulent of the three species, which makes little towers of armour-plated leaves, neatly arranged like chainmail. We'll see fingernail-sized *Oxalis compacta*, compact cushions of *Oreopolus glacialis*, and the broccoli-like inflorescences of the curious *Gamocarpha scapigera*, a member of the *Calyceraceae*. In damper areas are *Nassauvia pyramidalis*, *Calandrinia affinis*, *Cerastium humifusum*, various *Calceolaria* and *Ranunculus peduncularis*. *Chaetanthera lycopodioides* is yet another plant with dense silvery foliage but this time topped with nice white-pink-edged flowers with a ring of purple stamens surrounding the yellow centre. *Nassauvia lagascae* is a marvel. Tightly formed rosettes form a cushion which produces large 'satellite domes' covered in the flowers. During the afternoon of Day 15 we'll drive on to Santiago.

Day 16
depart Santiago at lunchtime

Day 17
arrive Europe

The 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 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, diminutive Magellanic Diving Petrels and altogether larger Imperial Cormorants and Black-browed Albatrosses.

Days 17-20

Torres del Paine

The impressive landscapes of Chile's flagship national park are brimming with wildlife and during our three day stay we'll have close views of 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 swathes of white *Gavilea araucana*, pale yellow *Gavilea supralabellata*, tall green *Chloraea leptopetala* and the queen of Chilean orchids, *Chloraea magellanica*. Much less impressive is the diminutive *Chloraea chica*. On the edge of tall forest by spectacular Lago Grey we'll find yellow *Gavilea lutea*, *Gavilea littoralis* and *Codonorchis lessonii*. Pretty orange-yellow *Alstroemeria patagonica* and mats of *Nassauvia fuegiana* bloom among billowing masses of *Adesmia corymbosa* and various spectacular *Lathyrus* species including *Lathyrus nervosus*. Perhaps the loveliest flower here is the orangey-brown and white *Calceolaria uniflora* the oversized flowers quivering in the brisk Patagonian breeze. There are other *Calceolarias* too such as *Calceolaria polyrhiza* and *Calceolaria biflora*. 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.

Guanaco's are a frequent sight and we'll have fun watching their antics, they are very entertaining animals. The rare Huemal, a kind of small deer, is found around our hotel and we'll see Fuegian Fox on occasion. Magellanic Woodpeckers and Thorn-tailed Rayaditos inhabit wooded areas, and on the open grasslands we'll find Scaly-throated Earthcreeper and plenty of stunning red Long-tailed Meadowlark. The many lakes are home to Great Grebe, Upland Geese and Yellow-billed Pintail, Coscoroba Swan and Chilean Flamingo.

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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