This was an amazing trip: from the cities south of Santiago, the vineyards, apple orchards, small villages, and lakes of Chile to the breathtaking emptiness of Argentinian Patagonia, with glaciers in the background, to the ‘End of the World’ in southern Chile! Ancient rock paintings, modern street art, and happy dogs added lots. I’ll just report, diary-style, and provide pictures without much socio-political comment. The above picture, from south of the Cueva de las Manos, is really typical of the arid, endless landscape and the below of Torres del Paine is iconic.

Tuesday 5 December
Arrival in Santiago (Chile) and a wait at the airport for papers to drive to Argentina. Started driving and tried San Fernando for a hotel (not obvious) and then Los Lingues (http://www.loslingues.com/) (too expensive) and finally Curicó (lovely DA Hotel). Curicó means ‘Black Waters’ in Mapudungun.
Wednesday 6 December
Drove to Temuco via Victoria and Carucautin (‘Gathering Stone’). Temuco is big with so much interesting art and buildings. It isn’t Patagonia but please take a look!
Building to the back of the church with the DA hotel in the background

Center of Temuco
Thursday 7 December
Explored the PN Heurquehue (‘Place of messengers’) via Villarrica and Pucón (‘Entrance’). ‘Lost’ in Freire on the way there; signs are rare when one needs them (but more later)! Gorgeous views of various volcanoes. Lovely local cheeses and honey.

Friday 8 December
Drove 250 km from Temuco to Osorno and east to Argentina, to San Carlos de Bariloche (Bariloche means ‘People from the other side of the mountains’). This was 490 km total, according to google.
Stayed in Arelauquen Lodge (with a cheap price; lovely views). The border crossing on the Chile side was relatively fast (40 minutes) but then one drives 17 km to the Argentinian side where the wait was longer (closer to 2 hours). The road around Bariloche was confusing, so it was a very long day!

From S. Carlos de Bariloche, it is 1800 km to Punta Arenas. The roads in Argentina (and Chile) can be really bad with huge potholes and (on unpaved roads) bad ruts. The signage is horrible, except when they tell you in the middle of nowhere that the Malvinas (Falkland Islands) are ... km! I can go on but the views and wonderfully helpful people make up for it many times! The latter go out of their way to explain where to go. (BTW Chile advertizes trips to the Falklands, not mentioning `Malvinas`).

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Saturday 9 December
Drove to Tecka where a hotel was supposed to exist. A gasstation had a motel but the security didn’t look great, especially with the kind of town Tecka is and no shops/restaurants.

So, on to Gobernador Costa (another hour) where there was a motel which wouldn’t take a credit card and the bank machine was empty. Hospedaje Guillermina was great and accepted Chilean money.
Sunday 10 December  
Continued on the 40, from Gob. Costa to Rio Mayo, Perito Moreno, and ended up in Bajo Caracoles (a very interesting experience). Visited the Cueva de las Manos on the way. This is amazing rock art from 13,000 BP on, mostly stencil art with pipes so that the age is known.
Cueva de las Manos

Painted desert before

The area from a distance

The road to it

Stencils of the hands in multiple colors

Entrance to the cave
Monday 11 December
From Bajo Caracoles (with not enough gasoline really but the pump was closed and it was a place where they might have wanted Argentinian pesos) to Gob. Gregores, which added an extra 100 miles, to get gas and to Tres Lagos and El Califante. Rough Road from Gob. Gregores until Tres Lagos. Picked up an Israeli/Argentinian and a French hitchiker who were on their way to El Chalten. The most notable events were getting out of Gob. Gregores onto the 40, managing the rough dirt road, seeing amazing guanacos and deserted gas stations. Pictures were lost; sorry! The below are guanaco pictures from later in the trip.
Tuesday 12 December
Explored PN Los Glaciares, especially the Perito Moreno glacier, which is still expanding.
Also went to the Walichu Caves where predecessors of the Tehuelches probably lived. Perito Moreno discovered these in 1877. Clear connections to the Los Manos area.

Sent some postcards/Christmas/New Year’s cards in the afternoon but that took time getting cash and figuring out what stamp went to which country. Many more to go but Chile might be easier. As I mentioned, Argentina is a terrible place for money: ATMs don’t work, credit cards are not accepted, etc.

Wednesday 13 December
Drove back into Chile using the border crossing at Cancha Carrera/Cerro Castillo: great with minimal waiting. Stayed in Pt. Natales and got an immediate parking ticket and it was not clear how to pay it. Looked around for the person who issued the ticket (as one is supposed to do) and, finding that person, he couldn’t find the ticket in the system! Stayed at Boreis House for a number of nights because it was great: what a relaxing atmosphere with great dog companions!
The Chilean government is building new infrastructure and, `unfortunately’, Pt. Natales won’t be the same in five years because a new airport is coming to give access to Torres del Paine. Below is the old airport that has very few flights at the moment; all over, there are signs about a better Chile and about the progress that will unite Chile(ans).
Thursday 14 December

Visited the Torres del Paine NP. The weather was cloudy/rainy so not much was visible. Still beautiful to go to the “W” starting place and go on it for a little while ... Would be lovely to do the actual trek.

Ruta 9 north

Torres hike with low clouds
Pt. Natales had/has meat packing/freezing industries and one of these old factories has been made into a (very expensive) hotel, The Singular. Snobbish! The result is beautiful, however; see below.

The art gallery in town, Galpón Patagonia (PG), is similarly housed in an old industrial building. Saw a booklet on a Polish painter who now lives in Pt. Natales, Ewa Okolowicz, whose work I really like.

Friday 15 December
Bruce Chatwin’s trip to Patagonia and his In Patagonia were inspired by a piece of giant sloth sent to Chatwin’s grandmother by a cousin who discovered it in a cave in Patagonia. That cave is close to Pt. Natales and the town has a statue of this sloth, a Milodon.
Excavations still ongoing into life 11,000 BP

The Milodon statue in Natales

The unpaved roads haven’t really dirtied the car too much. Here it is on the left with buildings and art from Pt. Natales added. This is a wonderful town!
There is lots of good beer in Patagonia and they drink **mate**, a caffeine-rich, bitterish drink one sips through a pipe. My own, wild guess is that this pipe is connected to the stencil paintings of the hand. The beer with the green label is also mate-influenced.
Saturday 16 December
Arrived in Punta Arenas: initially a flat landscape and then hilly with some interesting rock formations. **Morro Chico** is an archeological site with rock paintings.
And more typically Patagonian landscape, and busstop, on ruta 9 south

Church in Villa Tehuelces

Arrow points to the Strait(s) of Magellan
And Tierra del Fuego on the horizon

A room with a view to three sides in Pt. Arenas

There are ferries to the Falklands from here and to Cape Horn (after the Dutch city of Hoorn where Willem Schouten, who named it, originated). Cape Horn is where the Atlantic and Pacific meet. Not sure there is time to go there! [there wasn't]
Sunday 17 December
Returned to Pt. Natales, to try Torres del Paine again on Monday. On the way north of Pt. Arenas, there is a penguin colony but, after a dirt road of 25 miles, it turned out closed. Went another 15 miles to check and then ended up with an almost empty tank in Pt. Natales (according to the map, there was a gas station in Villa Tehuelques but it didn’t exist). Election day here so all restaurants are closed until 9 pm. It started raining hard but the Boreis Casas are lovely!

Monday 18 December
The weather was very good today, really lucky to be able to visit the park again. Below some pictures and a map of places visited on Monday and Wednesday.
Tuesday 19 December
Quiet day at Boreis Point: walked to town, visited the local museum (lots on Aonikenk culture and its demise and prehistoric rock art), waited an hour at the post office, and checked my e-mail. Dinner at The Singular; see above for pictures.
Wednesday 20 December
Went back to the NP Torres del Paine, to Laguna Azur, which has a NE view of the major ranges. Initially, the weather was lovely but then it closed in. Saw more Ñandú this time, a type of ostrich; see picture on p. 21.
Thursday 21 December

A really amazing trip to and in Tierrro del Fuego! Left Pt. Natales and went on the 9 to the 255 East and then 257 south on the ferry. The landscape was incredibly beautiful: very barren and it reminded me of Scotland in places. Didn’t take many pictures because the roads were very rough with many desvios and snowplows paving the roads. Some locals in Pt Natales had said to stay away from Porvenir (‘an oil town’) but nothing could be further from the truth: it is a town like the others were 20 years ago, almost no tourism. Lots of Croats settled and the food is Croatian. Cerro Sombrero is an oil town, however.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image 1</th>
<th>Image 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Typical landscape</td>
<td>Sheep herding, outside of Porvenir</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ferry at Pta. Delgada</td>
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<tr>
<td>Porvenir, pretty unspoilt!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hotel in Porvenir, arrow to my room</td>
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Friday 22 December
Decided to try to get the ferry from Porvenir to Pt. Arenas, because there had been miles of cars trying to get on the ferry at Pta Delgada to go north. It would have been nice to see more of Tierra del Fuego; the town's museum was a gem! Getting on the ferry at Porvenir turned out to be quite a madhouse too; lucky to get on!
Saturday 23 December
To the ‘End of the Road’, i.e. as far south as you can drive on the American continent. First to Fort Bulnes, from which the below picture is taken, looking south. Very fitting for the last real day of an amazing vacation.

Isla Dawson on the left; Victoria Peak (on the mainland) on the right

The original fort at Bulnes is from 1843; the current one is a replica, nicely done. The fort was the first Chilean settlement this far south. Because the climate was harsh, the settlement moved to Puentep Arena in 1848.

View through the woods from Bulnes
Fort Bulnes

The Beagle is famous for having Charles Darwin aboard but its explorations started earlier. The history of its captains is full of political and personal intrigue. See this wiki article: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Beagle. The first captain’s grave is in the English Cemetery along the road south of Fort Bulnes. See below.
Lots of professional murals and street art in Punta Arenas. I only got a little bit! If anyone is interested, I’ll send better pictures.

24 – 26 December
Left P. Arenas and flew to Santiago on SKY on the 24th and from Santiago on the 25th to arrive back in the US on the 26th.
**Postscript**

This trip had so many absorbing landscapes and I got quite a lot of awareness of earlier and current indigenous populations, Selk’nam, Mapuche, Kawéskar, etc, and migration by Chilotes, Croatians, New Zealanders, and others. I had Isabel Allende with me and had read Gabriela Mistral but the culture remained second to nature. I checked e-mail for half an hour/day, if it was possible; that too was a welcome change. My watch battery died and I didn’t get a replacement; I don’t have a phone so maps are still great. **Lady Florence Dixie** had been in Patagona in the 1870s and her account is great as is Bruce Chatwin’s! The total trip, according to google, is below; according to the car’s odometer, it was over 6000 km but that included many side trips. Google’s time estimate seems implausible though.

**Appendix 1: Building materials**

Many of the pictures above show brick buildings or corrugated iron ones (more typical). The new addition to a hotel had the roof on the left and, since many are painted bright colors, the results is on the right: something the extreme north of the earth does too!

Corrugated iron is used on the side of a house as well. I love the color differences and pastel!
Pt. Arenas

Temuco roofs

Detail

Pt. Arenas

Tecka

The same as in AZ: LDS church, Pt Arenas
Appendix 2: dogs rule (just a few pictured here) and I miss that already
Ona, Bories House dog

Ona (Uma?)’s friend

An escort of four, back from town