

# **namaste**



**March 2005**

**Vol 1, Issue 12**



**Patagonia special...**

**National Parks**

**Tierra del Fuego**

**Rafting & Kayaking**

**Plus...**

**Buenos Aires**

**Travel Photography Tips**

**Namaste Global Expedition...and more**



## Namaste!

Welcome to the new look March 2005 edition of Namaste News - I hope you like the bigger photos!

Covering over 6,000 miles, March was a magnificent and record-breaking month on expedition touring through Patagonia. From trekking and camping in incredible national parks to rafting the mighty Futaleufu river; from mud therapy and hot springs to the 'End of the World' in Tierra del Fuego; from off-

road adventures along the Carretera Austral to rainstorms on the unique island of Chiloe; and from fields of sunflowers to the Tango in the wonderful city of Buenos Aires...

Packed full of features this month as well as the regular updates, feel free to send me an email with your suggestions and ideas for future issues (chris.charlton@namaste.co.uk)

*Cheers, Chris*

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## Global Expedition Highlights

**3/3/05 Day 333**  
Aguas Calientes Mile 33130



**5/3/05 Day 335**  
Ancud, Chiloe Mile 33317



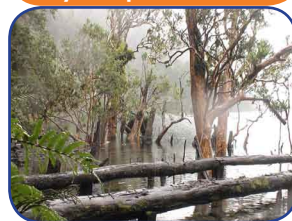
**7/3/05 Day 337**  
PN Puyuhue Mile 33608



**9/3/05 Day 339**  
Futaleufu Mile 33962



**11/3/05 Day 341**  
Puyuhuapi Mile 34061



**29/3/05 Day 359**  
Montevideo Mile 38260



Photos in this issue  
by Chris Charlton  
& Emma Verity

**15/3/05 Day 345**  
El Chalten Mile 34870



**26/3/05 Day 356**  
Buenos Aires Mile 38220



**16/3/05 Day 346**  
Perito Moreno Mile 35065



**24/3/05 Day 354**  
Bahia Blanca Mile 37891



**22/3/05 Day 352**  
San Julian Mile 36773



**20/3/05 Day 350**  
Ushuaia Mile 35980



**19/3/05 Day 349**  
Punta Arenas Mile 35588



**18/3/05 Day 348**  
Torres del Paine Mile 35294



## Expedition Trivia...

# of Days (overall):	31 (361)
Miles in month (overall):	5798 (38650)
Avg miles/day (overall):	187 (107)
Longest day miles (overall):	612 (612)
# countries (overall):	3 (16)
# of police stops (overall):	18 (106)

## Top Tips this month...

Top Tip:	Lago Azul, Torres del Paine
Favourite City:	Buenos Aires, Argentina
Adventure Spot:	Futaleufu River, Chile
Place to Stay:	Hostal Lluhay, Chiloe
Night Spot:	El Estado, Montevideo
Wilderness:	South-western Patagonia

## Features...

Explore this Patagonia Special including the Big 3 National Parks on p5, Tierra del Fuego on p6 and find out more about rafting and kayaking on the mighty Futaleufu on p7...

Pick up some useful travel photography tips on p6 and discover Buenos Aires in Argentina on p9. Then there's the Expedition Africa Plan on p10...



## Global Expedition Update

After pulling out of the natural wonder of the San Sebastian Termas, we headed across the border from Chile to Argentina. With a short stop in Junin de los Andes, where we discovered the only campsite that people are not allowed to camp overnight, we eventually found a sweet spot on the edge of a river.

The next morning, the self-sufficient Landie was put to good use re-inflating the car tyres of 2 other camp groups. Then it was back across the border into Chile, through the delightful Parque Nacional Puyuhue. At the customs stop, we chatted to a group of girls trying to get into Chile, but without the requisite international paperwork for their newly acquired Argentinian car. Sadly they were turned back as we continued on.

As dusk was falling we reached a small place on the edge of the lake known as Aguas Calientes. Soaked in the recent experience of the wonderful hot springs of San Sebastian, we were hungry for some more...

So we decided to have a spot of luxury, mud therapy and massage at one of Chile's most famous hot springs resorts, Termas de Puyehue, situated just down the road from Aguas Calientes. This baronial resort, set on elegant grounds, defines luxury with echo-chamber slate foyers, wide hallways and never-ending staircases. The spa, with its own set of hallways, has an outdoor pool, an indoor pool with jets and jacuzzis, and bath treatments with mud, seaweed, salts, essential oils, herbs, sulphur, or just about any combination thereof.

While we had 'lux-ed' it up a bit with the day fun, our budgets didn't extend to a stay overnight. So we enjoyed a roaring campfire, food and the last remnants of our stock of Salentein wine!

Touring through the remainder of the gorgeous southern Chilean Lake District (see more on page 4), we passed through Puerta Varas, a lovely town on edge of the lake with perhaps the best preserved concentration of Middle European architecture in the country. Then onto Puerto Montt to board the ferry to the unique island of Chiloe on Chile's Pacific coast.

From the meat, potato and seafood stew *curanto*



Volcano in the Lake District



Emma riding alongside the Futaleufu River

### Did you know?

Giganotosaurus, the largest meat-eating bipedal (two-footed) dinosaur yet found in the Southern hemisphere was discovered in north-western Patagonia in the early '90s from rocks dating from the late Cretaceous period, somewhere between 97 million and 65 million years old. The fossil remains were recovered from floodplain deposits that also contain abundant remains of very large plant-eating sauropod (four-legged) dinosaurs. It is estimated to have been up to 12.5m long with a weight of 6 to 8 tonnes - a little larger than the Tyrannosaurus.

to the folkloric creature *Trauco*, from unique wood-shingled churches to stilted *palafitos* teetering on the edge of serene inlets, the island of Chiloe has an identity all of its own. Though the weather was turbulent, we explored the local food and nightlife, from our base at the incredibly hospitable Hostel Lluhay in Ancud. Run by Don Hector and his family, the top recommendation in the Lonely Planet guide was a real gem.

South from Chiloe, Chile's long chains of islands along its southern coast are actually formed by the peaks of submerged coastal mountains, and the coastline here is indented by numerous fjords.

Our intended route back to the mainland was to

take the ferry from Castro, further south on the island, to El Chaiten, as we needed to be in Futaleufu for a spot of rafting on the 8th. Unfortunately our plan was scuppered due to the lack of ferries, so we decided to drive around rather than wait 2 days. Retracing our route to the border through Parque Nacional Puyuhue, our day's journey ended at the closed border around 10pm that night. As would become a bit of a theme for us in the month, finding fantastic places in the darkness after a long day's drive, we found a lovely cabin in the forest.

This national park is a mixture of dense, humid evergreen forest, lakes and Volcan Puyuhue, at 2240m tall, is the centrepiece. The volcano blew its top after the earthquake in 1960 turning the forest into a stark landscape of sand dunes and lava rivers, but fortunately for us and everyone who visits, it has now returned to its original, beautiful state.

As with all foiled plans on expedition, on many occasions the alternative option turns out to be great. Such was our day, touring through more of the Argentinian Lake District, stopping on route for a fantastic steak in Bariloche. If there's one thing to

*continued on page 3...*

## Coming Up...to find out how to join, click below

### April 2005

Exploring Uruguay then west into Paraguay, stopping at the incredible 1km-high Iguaca Falls. Touring southern Brazil including the amazing Pantanal wildlife region and Aparados da Serra before tracking east to Rio, from where the expedition vehicle is shipped to Cape Town South

### May 2005

Arriving in Cape Town on 12th May for the start of the Africa leg... Time to explore gorgeous Cape Town, built on the peninsula of the Cape of Good Hope with Table Mountain as a backdrop before heading north through the western Cape to the Tswalu Kalahari Reserve & rhino sanctuary...



Camping in the rain...



### Global Expedition Update cont...

eat in Argentina, it's definitely great steaks - simply delicious and inexpensive too!

Bariloche is situated in western Argentina in the Río Negro Province on the southern shore of Lake Nahuel Huapi. Reminding me somewhat of Chamonix in France, the city is at the southern edge of the extensive, forested Patagonian lake country, bounded on the west by Andean peaks, some of



Perito Moreno Glacier

which are snowcapped throughout the year. Skiing is the favourite sport in winter, and boating, fishing, and hiking are popular in summer.

Crossing back into Chile, we reached the end of the metalled road and 20km beyond the small town of Futaleufu, we arrived at the riverside camp of Bio Bio around 8pm. There we stayed for 3 nights and 2 days of awesome horse-riding, kayaking, rafting, beers and hot tubs!! The 'Fu' river, with its crystalline blue and impressively wild water, has international fame as one of the best white-water rivers in the world [see more on rafting and kayaking in Patagonia on page 7.]

After a fond farewell to the Bio Bio team, we headed west for a short distance before turning south onto the Carretera Austral and the real beginning of back-country Patagonia, conjurer of intrigue for centuries and present-day provider of unparalleled adventure.

What cost an initial investment of US\$300 million, the Carretera Austral road, well track, took over 10 years to build, cost 11 workers their lives and has become one of South America's best adventure road trips. Pinochet's plan to cut a highway through the Aisen region was not based on geographic common sense, but I'm glad he did for this was a roller coaster 4\*4 multi-day drive. Aside from the rain, of course, but then it was Patagonia, and the rainforest region to boot. In fact, this part of Patagonia receives almost constant rain, up to 4,000mm per year!

Our first stop on the Austral was in Parque Nacional Quelat, just north of Puyuhuapi in the rainforest...and boy, did it rain! Fortunately, we were able to make camp in a deserted campground on the edge of a mysteriously quiet and misty lake with shelter and dry wood! Quelat is also a wild domain of steep-sided fjords, rushing rivers, evergreen forests, impenetrable foliage, creeping glaciers and high volcanic peaks, an off-the-beaten track destination for sure.

Stopping in Coihaique, which is the main Austral backpacker centre, we met lots of travellers, including Christian who was cycling, yes cycling, north to Canada! With another day and night of torrential rain, we pitched camp in the grounds of a hosteria outside Puerto Murta on Lago General Carrera. Even though the canvas roof tent had survived freezing snow in Canada and tropical thunder storms in Central America, it was no

match for the persistence and continuous nature of Patagonia rain. Unfortunately, perpetual rain on an already soaking wet canvas tent meant that we awoke somewhat damp! Thankfully, it wasn't cold, as that could have been really miserable.

In order to access the wonderful national parks of southern Patagonia further south, we turned east off the Austral along the track to Chile Chico. This mountainous road known as Paso Las Llavas was a definite roller-coaster, though our lack of views due to the rain were a little disappointing. Oh, where had the sunshine gone!

Back in Argentina during a brief stop in the one-hostal village of Bajo Caracoles, situated in the middle of nowhere in the Patagonian steppe, we enjoyed sharing stories with Andrea and Vince, Aussies driving around South America in their Ford wagon!

We awoke the next day to a glorious sight as the sun had finally returned. And this was good news indeed for later that day, our intended destination was the first of the 'Big 3' Patagonia national parks, Los Glaciares. Though we knew that the weather in this region could be highly unpredictable, we felt justified in some sunshine after our Austral downpour!

Established in 1937, Los Glaciares National Park is one of the most outstanding glacial areas of the world with spectacular scenery. In the less accessible north its mountains include Mount Fitzroy, which at 3,375 m (11,073 ft) is the highest of a range of peaks that form part of the Andes.

On the road into El Chalten, the base for Mount Fitzroy in the northern part of the park, we were treated to some incredible views of the lake, glaciers and mountains in perfect early evening light.

It was also a good chance to dry out our kit. So we filled our rooms in a cosy Alpine-style chalet in town with duvets, pillows, mattresses, sheets and the like to dry overnight. We also pitched the tent and awning outside to dry in the wind.

After a morning's trek to Laguna Torre with its fabulous vistas of rivers, glaciers and mountains, we continued on to the southern part of the park around the famous Perito Moreno glacier. Rather than stay in the tourist town of El Calafate on Lake Argentino, we carried on for another hour in order to camp on the edge of the lake overlooking the Moreno glacier.



Sunrise over Laguna Azul

For anyone used to seeing glaciers, the unique part about this region is the amazing way they tumble directly into azure lakes. The largest of the glaciers are Uppsala Glacier (30 miles long), and Moreno Glacier, which has an ice face that is about 5 km (3 mi) in length and up to 45 m (150 ft) in height. The latter is unusual in that it is still moving forward at about 30 cm (12 in) a day, and icebergs are regularly calved from it into Lake Argentino.

With such spectacular scenery, we were up at 6:30am to see an incredible sunrise that turned the glacier through a beautiful series of colours before dropping down to the water for a boat trip that gets you up close and personal with the glacier.

And right on cue, a huge wall of the glacier broke

*continued on page 4...*



Arriving in Torres del Paine



### Global Expedition Update cont...

off and plunged into the lake to form a new iceberg. Though did I have the camera out at the time? Whilst not as spectacular as that, I did manage to get some falling ice footage which was great...

Our next Patagonia 'Big 3' treat was Torres del Paine in Chile. It is probably Patagonia's most well-known and popular national park and for good reason, it was spectacular. We were a little concerned about what we would find, though,



Cabin in Tierra del Fuego

as we had heard about a fire that had ripped through about 15,000 hectares of the park only 1 month before. As we learned when we arrived, it was started by a Czech backpacker, camping in a prohibited spot, when his stove exploded. Escalating to the point of the Czech government donating money to the clean-up, can you imagine how that guy feels? Muppet!

Fortunately, given the type of vegetation and the overall size of the park, we were pleased to find that the fire had not significantly impacted the aesthetics of the landscape. But the real impact, however, was to the wildlife, displaced by the damage and forced to find new homes. Unlike in North America where many forest fires are started by natural means, such as lightning strikes, we were told by one of the firemen still in the park, that all fires in this region are man-made.

With only 2 nights to spare, I had previously selected a place to camp on the north-eastern shore of Laguna Azul (remembering a photo from a magazine some time ago), so having completed border formalities, we slowly made our way through the park, arriving as darkness had fallen and set camp.

Oh, and what a sunrise, the best of the expedition so far! Watching the sun come up and play its dance of natural light whilst lying in the rooftop on the edge of the lake was truly serene. I took the cover photo of this newsletter whilst in bed in the tent at this campsite.

As on many occasions on expedition, we were sad to leave but our time constraint called...we had some mileage to do. We slowly toured south through the remainder of the park, enjoying our mini-safari as the wildlife was out in force; then south to Punta Arenas.

Punta Arenas, a city in southern Chile, is one of the southernmost cities in the world and an important trading centre and supply base. It was founded in 1849 for the purpose of reinforcing Chilean claims of sovereignty over the Strait of Magellan and became a refuelling station for shipping prior to the opening of the Panama Canal.

Having had some computer peripheral problems further north, I had pre-arranged for some new parts to coincide with our arrival in Punta Arenas. Congratulations to DHL on the one hand, and a letter of discontent to the failure of Fedex on the other. Beware post office opening hours and

customs getting hold of packages!

Then it was onwards to Tierra del Fuego, the 'End of the World' as it is known. We chose to go by the quick ferry option on the north side of the island rather than via the limited and longer service to Porvenir thanks to Marcus, an exploratory geologist we met in Punta Arenas.

It was going to be a lightning visit of only 2 days given our need to be in Buenos Aires by 25 March. We lucked out again that night finding a hidden-away wooden cabin in the dark. It's always a joy to wake up to find that you have a great view, and this one was overlooking beautiful forest and a lake.

In glorious sunshine, we drove the remaining 100km to Ushuaia, the true southernmost city in the world, to explore a little, including a fascinating museum about the indigenous peoples (see more on page 6), and a fantastic buffet lunch.

And of course we managed to find room for plenty of 'end of the world' gags...You know the old cliché when something goes wrong - "oh, it's not the end of the world" - well, you couldn't argue that one here!

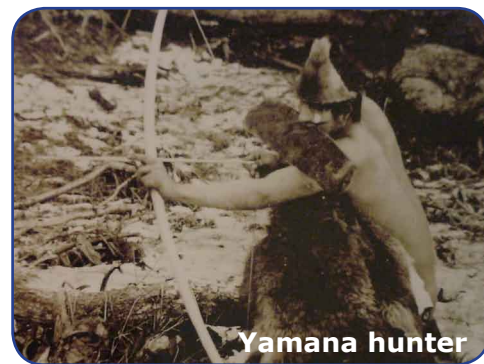
On our return to Punta Arenas, at one point I managed to do a bit of unexpected off-road driving in mid-conversation, as we slid off the outside curve of the track!! No worries in the Landie though.

Still tired from our long 2-day drive across Tierra del Fuego, we set out on a monstrous 4-day, 2,750 km (1,720 mi) drive north to Buenos Aires. We had chosen to spend all of our available time exploring western Patagonia, as to the east it is miles and miles of flat, Patagonian steppe. With the winds that rip constantly across these flat and largely empty lands, it is ideal territory for developing wind energy.

With interesting stopovers and games of pool in local bars, gorgeously long and drawn-out sunsets, and visits to the coast, we made our way north to the wonderful city of Buenos Aires. Of the people we met along this coastal drive, it was the three sisters from China touring South America independently

in a Land Cruiser, that were great. For them just to be doing that, the world has indeed changed for the better. I look forward to meeting them again, perhaps when I reach China, if not before.

In Buenos Aires, our first port of call was to meet up with a fellow Land Rover fan and friend, Nick, and his family, for dinner. Nick had been a great help in the run up to our arrival in helping to organise the service for my Landie and drumming



Yamana hunter

up some publicity.

In between interviews with the Buenos Aires Herald and Fox Sports TV; exploring the city and live tango shows in San Telmo and at Michaelangelo, I managed to squeeze in a day servicing the Land Rover at Mickey's.

With a fond farewell to Vaughn, who was heading home to LA the next day; and to BA, a city I shall return to for sure, Emma and I caught the ferry to Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay. Heading northwards to Paraguay and the Pantanal of Brazil before turning eastwards to Rio, there are only 4 weeks left in South America. I also need to finalise the shipping logistics & paperwork requirements ready for the expedition's arrival in Africa...

by Chris Charlton



Trials and tribulations around Cape Horn



## Patagonia National Parks - the Big Three...

### Lake District



Few landscapes surpass the continuous beauty of this region, where volcanic cones, blanketed by snow and glaciers, tower above deep blue lakes, ancient forests and verant farmland. The region contains many national parks in both Chile and Argentina that offer countless activities from sailing to climbing, horse-riding to thermal relaxation.



The northern region is a treasure trove of hidden-away thermal springs. Ranging from natural thermal springs on the edge of rivers (such as at San Sebastian) to full-on thermal spas offering mud therapy and massage (such as at Termas de Puyuhue), opportunities abound.



In addition to exploring the towns of the region in both Chile and Argentina, including Bariloche, Temuco and Puerto Montt, it is also a good place to explore the history of the Mapuche, the only Native Americans on the continent to successfully resist both the Incas and the Spanish, maintaining their independence in a 350-year struggle, until 1883.

### Los Glacieres



Situated in this national park, the Moreno glacier is the most southerly of all the glaciers descending from the Campo de Hielo Sur in the Patagonian Andes. It is also the most spectacular, blocking the outlet of the River Rico into Lake Argentino. Icebergs continually calve off the glacier into the lake along a front some 5 km wide.



Further north in the park, Mount Fitzroy demarcates the border between Argentina and Chile. Known as Chaltel in Chile, this granite mountain is 3,375 m (11,073 ft) high and lies near Lake Viedma and forms part of a range that contains other impressively high mountains.

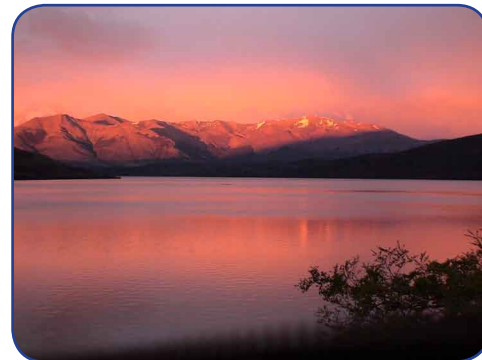


Los Glacieres national park offers some of the best trekking and climbing in all of Patagonia. From the two primary bases of El Chalten (for Fitzroy) and El Calafate (for Perito Moreno), there are numerous trails and campsites to choose from. For the mountaineer, Fitzroy is a prize worthy of any Alpine peak.

### Torres del Paine



Established in 1957 and covering over 182,250 hectares (450,000 acres), this national park is situated in the south of Chile in the Magallanes region in what was formerly Chilean Patagonia. It was created to safeguard the area surrounding the Paine massif and the basin of the Paine River from encroaching human activity.



It contains a surprising variety of terrain with bogs, glaciers, rocky gullies, lakes, and forests. The classic granite mountains of the park, including the famous towers, rise high from the Patagonian steppe and can be seen from all directions. Camping and accomodation are easily available in the park.



The park also has a variety of flora across its terrain, such as low-altitude violets and orchids, mosses and grasses in the tundra, and alpine shrubs and herbs. The fauna include nandus (Patagonian emu), condors, silver foxes, llamas, horses and many other smaller mammals. The tracks that criss-cross the park provide ample wildlife viewing

## Tierra del Fuego...

The archipelago of Tierra del Fuego that forms the southern extremity of South America belongs partly to Argentina and partly to Chile. Bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the east, the Antarctic Ocean to the south, and the Pacific Ocean to the west, the islands are separated from the continental mainland by the Strait of Magellan and the most southerly point is the infamous Cape Horn.



Ushuaia

On March 31, 1520, as the southern winter was beginning, the fleet of Ferdinand Magellan, Portuguese navigator and explorer, put into what is now Port San Julián, on the southern coast of Patagonia, where it remained for nearly six months. During that period the crew came to resent their Portuguese captain and a mutiny occurred, forcing Magellan to execute the ringleader. One of his ships was wrecked surveying the coast and on October 21, 1520, Magellan sailed into the

passage to the Pacific Ocean that is now named after him, the Strait of Magellan. It took 38 days to navigate the treacherous strait, and the crew of the San Antonio deserted and returned to Spain. Fires [from indigenous camps] were seen along the shores to the south, causing Magellan to name this land Tierra del Fuego (land of fire). After a journey of 530 km (330 mi), on November 28, 1520, his three ships sailed into the ocean, which Magellan named "Pacific" (meaning "peaceful") because of its calmness. He then became the first European to cross the Pacific Ocean and the first person to circumnavigate the globe.

To the south of Tierra del Fuego is the Drake Passage, also called Drake Strait. Named after the English seaman Sir Francis Drake, who discovered it during his circumnavigation of the globe in 1578, it is the stretch of ocean between Cape Horn and the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula. It is 640 km (400 mi) wide and about 800 km (500 mi) long. It is through the Drake Passage that ships travel when they round the notorious Cape Horn, and it forms part of the Southern Ocean and the South Pacific Ocean. It is a stormy region with immense prevailing winds and currents both travelling from west to east. It is this that makes the eastwards passage of sailing ships through the Drake Passage difficult.

The peoples native to this region suffered greatly from diseases brought by Europeans, and few survive today. Evidence of their origin and hunting-and-gathering lifestyle dates from 7000 BC. Around the Strait of Magellan, the Ona, Yamana, and Alacaluf lacked the game animals of the Pampas further north; they survived

principally on fish and shellfish, but also hunted seals and sea lions. Nomadic peoples, they lived in small wigwams covered with bark or sealskins and in spite of the cold, foggy climate, they wore little clothing.

The Yamana's most prized possession was their canoe, used both to obtain food and as a means of transport. Constructed from three large strips of bark from the Coihue tree, they often lit fires in



Indigenous art

the centre for warmth.

Today, the port town of Ushuai sits at the southern edge of the largest island of Tierra del Fuego. As a stopover for ships, the town also serves as the start point for many expeditions to the Antarctic continent. A place to return to then for the forthcoming 2006-7 Namaste Antarctica Adventure...

by Chris Charlton

## Travel Photography Tips...

Travel photography, like all photography, presents a series of issues to produce high quality images. The main difference when you are travelling is really about the size, weight and durability of your equipment, and the need for you to be self-sufficient.

Most importantly, to get great results, here's ten top tips:



Vaughn at work on expedition

**1. Know your equipment.** It's best not to travel with a new camera unless you have spent lots of time understanding how it all works. And be sure to bring the manual until you do.

**2. Know your film** and how it renders colour. Choose the ones you know and carry more than you think you will need. Running out in the middle of nowhere can be a real pain. With digital, adjust your exposures manually;

or at least learn how the auto-exposure system interprets light.

**3. Use a tripod** if possible as it ensures a sharp image and allows you to create visual effects if shooting shutter speeds more than 1/60th second. These can be pocket-size to full size depending on your available space and/or weight constraints.

**4. Choose your lenses carefully.** There is no need to take everything if 1 or 2 lenses will cover what you will be shooting. For general purpose use, a wide angle lens plus a good zoom lens (up to 300-400mm if possible).

**5. Light.** It makes the difference between an average image and a wonderful photograph that friends will remember. Being in the right place at the right time is everything. Early morning and late afternoon / early evening can be particularly good. And be prepared to wait.

**6. Composition.** Always fill your frame and think about what you want the picture to say before shooting. You can also crop the image later if it's not quite right, but this just adds work that you can avoid.

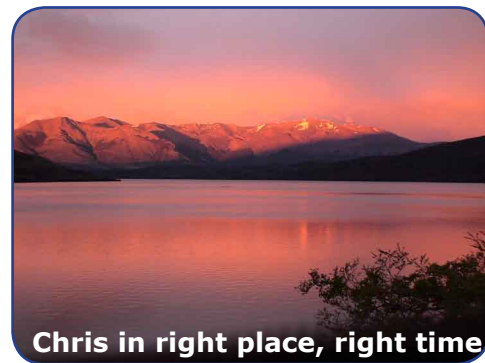
**7. Awareness.** Turnaround and see what is going on around you. Sometimes a more interesting composition is the one you didn't see initially, or right behind you.

**8. Filters.** For shooting colour film or digital, you can get away with just a polariser to reduce unwanted reflections and darken washed out

skies. It also protects your lens.

**9. Back-up.** Carry a small, spare camera in case your main one breaks or malfunctions.

**10. Enjoy the moment.** Don't make the photography so important that it takes away the joy of the moment. Take your time and enjoy where you are.



Chris in right place, right time

With the significant increase in the quality of digital cameras, as to whether you choose to use film or digital largely depends on weight and how long you want to wait to see your photos. One advantage of digital is that you can email your friends from the road and bore them even before you get home!

by Chris Charlton & Vaughn Hart



## Rafting & Kayaking in Patagonia...

Of the mighty rivers that criss-cross the famed Patagonia wilderness, the rio Futaleufu in northern Patagonia (known locally as "the Fu") is the crown jewel, standing out for its famous azure, clear waters that churn into a frothy ribbon of sparkling white water!

The Fu is a high volume river that flows out



**Blasting through the Mundaca Hole on the "Bridge to Bridge" section...**

of a series of lakes in Argentina and crosses through a trans-Andean divide and flows through Chile into the Pacific after tumbling down a wild and continuous 40 mile corridor of white water.

In the summer months, the river flows on average at 7 to 12 thousand cubic feet per second, and fluctuates quickly with rain. The best rafting is from the rio Azul confluence down to the Casa de Piedra rapid. In this 20 mile section you will run the gamut of class 3 through to awesome class 5 rapids that follow one another like a bead of pearls, each one connected to the next by a strong current and minor rapids.

The 'Terminator' rapid is the longest and most challenging class V. There is also a rapid named 'Mundaca' which is class 4 and similar



**Raft eddied out below the Terminator rapid in rescue position for following rafts...**

to the rapids found on the Zambezi river in Africa. You can run the middle and experience running a bus size hole, or run the shoulder and attempt missing the hole. Either way, it is a thrilling rapid that will leave you grinning from ear to ear!

The river has many different sections that appeal to varying levels of kayak and or rafting ability. The whole section is open to expert class V kayakers, and to rafters who place themselves in the hands of highly skilled raft guides. With thorough training on an entry level section of river, even an eager novice can attempt some of these sumptuous rapids.

If you are a beginner kayaker, the Futaleufu is fed by two minor rivers, the rio Espolon, and the rio Azul which offer low volume, class 2-3 rapids. It is a great place to learn, and improve on basic skills. Intermediate kayakers that have a solid roll will have heaps of fun kayaking the Class 4 "Bridge to Bridge" section on the Fu. What is particularly great about the Fu, is that individuals, groups of friends or couples with mixed abilities, who happen to be either kayakers or rafters, can all go down the river together and everyone is happy! Such flexibility and expert guiding is available at Bio Bio Expeditions.

The legend of the Bio Bio is that it is named after a migratory summer bird that flies south every year for the Austral summer months

**Text and photos by Laurence Alvarez-Roos from**



**www.bbxrafting.com**

**email: larsalvarez@earthlink.net**

from December to March. The song of this bird is happy and sounds like Phio-Phio, in multiple chirps. This also happens to be the best time of year to paddle in Patagonia.

At Bio Bio, the raft guides and kayak instructors are a mix of international river stars that have melded to form the core of the welcoming Bio Bio paddling family. Piero is Peruvian, Diego is from Argentina, Alex and Jorge from Costa Rica, Rachel from New Zealand and the owners, Marc and Laurence, are Californians. All of them have the ability to guide rafts, provide river safety from a cataraft, or teach and guide kayakers. The anglo-lantino style is thoroughly professional,

**"After meeting Laurence from Bio Bio, I ensured the Namaste Global Expedition found its way to their basecamp on the 'Fu' in Chile. With Emma and Vaughn on board the Expedition with mixed river experience, we decided to stay for 2 days of magnificent horse-riding, kayaking and rafting; and 3 nights of fantastic hot tubs, sauna and riverside bar fun. With 2 fabulous river camps and an excellent and fun guide team, Bio Bio was the perfect choice for exploring the wonders of river running in Patagonia..."**, Chris Charlton, Namaste

yet relaxed and "tranquilo"! You will have absolute confidence that their caring is a key to your feeling perfectly safe on the river.

When you are not on the river, you can enjoy horse back riding, mountain biking and hiking. The two river retreats also offer hot tubs, a gorgeous massage therapist to soothe



**Marc Goddard otter launches after a portage of the Class V+ Zeta rapid...**

your muscles, a sauna, hot showers and a sunset bar overlooking the river. You sleep in river side bungalow tent platforms complete with mattresses, pillows and stunning views! Angling opportunities also abound with a catch and release fishing policy.

The amount of fun you can have at the Fu is non stop and ever varied, from plunging down the river, to soaking in the tub to salsa dancing with your guides and new friends!

The Fu is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to rivers to run in Patagonia, with the rios Figueroa, Baker and Pascua all being beautiful rivers. These others are more remote though and have much more complex logistics in terms of getting on and off the river. The Fu is the most accessible and offers the greatest variety.



**River side hot tub and bar provides the perfect compliment to a day on the Fu!**

You can also travel down the famous "Carettera Austral" south, an amazing adventure road trip in itself, and literally come across countless streams and rivers to explore. But, you will not find another river like the Fu - a unique white water mecca!



## People

### Fellow Adventurers...



Vaughn Hart, 57, photographer from Los Angeles, USA, and Emma Verity, 31, web developer from London, England, both continued on the expedition through amazing Patagonia to the 'End of the World' in Tierra del Fuego before turning north along Argentina's Atlantic coast to Buenos Aires...

"So much more than I ever expected..." Emma, 30/3/2005

"a unique opportunity to fulfill a lifelong dream to see Patagonia..." Vaughn, 27/3/2005

### Along the way...

A big thank you to all those people who we've met along the way in March, including:

Don & family, Peggy & Philippe, Bud & Gustavo (Chiloe), Karen, Lars, Marc, Nicole, Sarah, Pierre, Phil, Jorge, Rachel, John, Janet & Eric & the southern boys (Futaleufu), Yuko & Ed, Cristiana, Vim, Christian (Coihaique), Vince & Andrea (Bajo Caracoles), Jorge, Sergio, Jock & Alan (Torres del Paine), Marcus (Punta Arenas), Dongyan & sisters (Trelew), Jose & team, Bonnie, Carlos & Mickey (Buenos Aires), Gilberto (Montevideo)...

And a word of special thanks to Nick Livingston and his lovely family Ana, Emma & Barnaby (and the Landies) for their hospitality and assistance in Buenos Aires.

## Letters & Emails

Thank you for all your letters, emails, text messages, and faxes. Each month, a few excerpts will be printed here...

"... I read the last Land Rover Magazine, and I saw the article about your Expedition. From that, I'm interested in finding out more; and I know that your Expedition will come to my country in mid of the year. At this time, I'm creating the first Land Rover Club in Mozambique...For now, we can start with e-mails and prepare a reception for the Expedition...", Faruk, Maputo, Mozambique

"... Hope the final leg in S America is going well. I have enjoyed working my way back through the newsletters since reading about your trip... Looking forward to seeing the next installment... Should be able to join you for 4 weeks or so...on your Botswana and Zimbabwe legs...", Lesley, Gulf of Mexico

"...Thanks for your email and words of thanks. We were very pleased you made the effort to weave the futaleufu into your travels and look forward to sharing the rest with you some day. It is great to meet a kindred spirit who is really going for it...Please give Emma and Vaughn my warmest regards, cheers", Laurence, Futaleufu, Chile

"...I do read your Namaste broadcasts with great envy... Looking forward to North Wales at Easter (notice the Namaste Land Rover does not have it on the itinerary, I guess off-road performance lacking, my new Discovery will have to lead the way...), followed by grass skiing in Meribel for the last week of the season. Will do an addendum to your newsletter, when the going gets tough... Would say take it easy, but confident you are", Chris, London, England

"...Good to read the February update and sounds like you are still having a ball. Did notice one email about somebody else planning a trip... One thing we were trying to do with our website was make it useful for those like us planning idiotic trips like this!! (www.lollysglobaltrek.com) We are in Panama City awaiting Lolly... Then its northwards towards Costa Rica with a few stops on the way. Happy driving...", John and Linz, Panama City

Finally, many thanks to Paul, Mum & Peter for arranging delivery of computer parts and accessories to Punta Arenas...Chris

## Buenos Aires

Buenos Aires, founded in 1580 on the west bank of the Río de la Plata, is Argentina's capital and most populous city. It is also one of the world's largest cities. In the early 1990s, more than 12.5 million people, more than one-third of the country's population, lived in the greater Buenos Aires area.

As Argentina's principal seaport, Buenos Aires is also the country's commercial centre. The Plaza de Mayo, close to the waterfront at Buenos Aires



eastern edge, was the starting point for the original settlement and is now the home of the presidential palace. A city of many unique and overlapping districts, Buenos Aires can keep the visitor hooked forever.

Buenos Aires is also the home of the Tango - modern ballroom dance, laced with passion and latin spirit. Introduced and widely popularised in Latin America in the early 20th century, the tango was considered disreputable at first, but has become a defining image of the city and a must-see when there, from the street dancers of San Telmo to the professional shows at Michaelangelo.

This dance for couples is characterised by a great variety of long and quick steps and frequent posturing; it is full of passion and requires a large amount of space. The music that accompanies the dance is equally recognisable, with halting counter-rhythms and florid melodic passages that are the hallmark of Latin American tango. Both the music and dance of the tango were influenced by the Cuban habañera.

Although the Tango originated in Argentina, strong traditions of tango music have emerged



in other South American countries, in particular Uruguay. More to look forward to then...

by Chris Charlton

## In the News

### In the News

Upcoming features on the Namaste Global Expedition to appear on Fox Sports TV and in the Buenos Aires Herald...

See [www.namaste.co.uk/news](http://www.namaste.co.uk/news) for details...

### Previous Newsletters

Previous issues of Namaste News are also available at [www.namaste.co.uk/news](http://www.namaste.co.uk/news) or click the links below if online:

April 2004	May 2004	June 2004
July 2004	Aug 2004	Sep 2004
Oct 2004	Nov 2004	Dec 2004
Jan 2005	Feb 2005	

## Website Update

### Stage 1 Development

Namaste Management Case Studies are in production. Available from April 2005.

### Stage 2 Development

The first Namaste Management Guides (Project Management Series; Leadership & Management Series) and Namaste Fun Films (Climbing Denali; A Taste of North America) are now in production; and should become available from July 2005.

#### March 2005 Stats

Hits: 44,654  
Countries: 52  
Downloads: 2,850 Mb

#### February 2005 Stats

Hits: 47,086  
Countries: 54  
Downloads: 2,313 Mb



# namaste

GLOBAL EXPEDITION

## Join the expedition in Africa

for an adventure of a lifetime...

### Namaste!

Welcome to the Africa Plan of the Namaste Global Expedition, an amazing around the world adventure. Join me on the expedition for a weekend, a week, a month or longer, and it is up to us to decide what we want to do.

Click here to download the full Africa Plan PDF (to be updated monthly), which should give you some idea of the expedition plan for Africa, though this is subject to variation depending upon conditions, politics and what you would like to do. You will also

find other info documents for more detail, including how to join the expedition.

If you need anything more, please don't hesitate to contact me, by email, fax or phone. I look forward to your suggestions and ideas; and travelling with you soon...

*Cheers, Chris*



### Africa Route Plan

Africa. This vast and diverse continent of 53 countries stretches from the Cape of Good Hope to the shores of the Mediterranean. Encompassing the world's largest desert and one of its most extensive rainforests, it is the adventurer's last frontier. Whether it's the stunning wastes of the Sahara Desert with its barren mountains, the inspiring beauty of snow-capped Kilimanjaro rising sheer from the East African plateau, the lush, mist-covered volcanoes and lakes of Kenya's Rift Valley, colourful tribal peoples, or the lure of ancient Egypt, this continent has them all. And of course, the large numbers of big game that still roam the plains of this fascinating land make Africa the king of safari...



This route plan is a guide only. The exact routing will be determined on the ground depending upon conditions, politics, and accessibility...

CLICK HERE TO  
DOWNLOAD THE FULL  
NAMASTE GLOBAL  
EXPEDITION AFRICA  
PLAN

### Highlights...

Perhaps nowhere in the world will you find such a variety of cultures, vistas, contrasts and contradictions, cities ancient and modern as in Africa. From the snow-capped peaks of Kilimanjaro and Mt Kenya, to the scorching heat of the desert; from the impenetrable jungles of the Congo, to the silver-sanded beaches bordering the Indian Ocean.

A key theme of the Namaste Africa Expedition will be to explore many of the continent's game reserves, whilst touring through this continent full of culture and design, of music and dancing, with a wealth of wildlife, flora and fauna. Some of the planned highlights include:

#### May 2005

Time to explore gorgeous Cape Town, built on the peninsula of the Cape of Good Hope with Table Mountain as a backdrop before heading north through the western Cape to the Tswalu Kalahari Reserve & rhino sanctuary...

#### June 2005

Exploring Namibia's incredible landscapes from the Fish River Canyon in the south to the Skeleton Coast; from the Kalahari Desert in the east to the Caprivi Strip in the north. Touring the Okavango Delta, Makgadikgadi pan & diamond mines of Botswana...

#### July 2005

Heading north to the Victoria Falls and awesome rafting on the Zambezi in Zimbabwe, then south through the northern Kruger National Park. Exploring the length of Malawi (including the lake), often known as 'little Switzerland' owing to its beauty. And short trips into Mozambique and across Zambia...

#### August 2005

Across the great plains of Tanzania before climbing Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest at 5,895m (19,340 ft). Then to the coast for some relaxation and diving on Zanzibar before a journey inland through Kenya's incredible game parks, including Tsavo & the Masai Mara. And in both countries, a chance to see much of the Great Rift Valley, one of Africa's most spectacular sights...

#### September 2005

Through the Kabalega and Ruwenzori national parks of Uganda; and unforgettable river journeys on Africa's second biggest river in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Discovering the equatorial jungle, exotic butterflies and the pygmies of the Central African Republic before crossing to the Waza National Park of northern Cameroon...

#### October 2005

A visit to the capital of Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou, once the centre of one of the ancient Mossi kingdoms; and the famous red, white and black Volta rivers. Onto historic Mopti, the 'Venice of Mali' founded in the 13th century and the legendary Timbuktoo before experiencing the unique lifestyle of the nomads of Niger...

#### November 2005

From the mountains of Guinea to the Adrar plateau of Mauritania; the Atlantic coast of the Gambia and Senegal, before turning north through Mauritania along the western Sahara before a tour of the length of the Atlas Mountains and ancient cities of Morocco...

#### December 2005

Exploring Roman ruins of coastal Libya; and the scenic and pre-historic wonders of its Fezzan region. Then into Egypt to explore the the Gifl Kebir plateau, the Nile river region, Cairo and the pyramids, the Great Desert Road and of course some Red Sea diving off the coast of the Sinai Peninsular...

[www.namaste.co.uk/africa.htm](http://www.namaste.co.uk/africa.htm)



# **namaste**

**What's next...**

**April 2005**

**Wildlife of  
The Brazilian  
Pantanal  
Rio de  
Janeiro**

**May 2005**

**Overland in  
Africa  
Tswalu Rhino  
Reserve of  
South Africa**

**June 2005**

**Okavango  
Delta of  
Botswana  
Adventures  
in Namibia**

**Plus the usual Global Expedition Update...**

**[www.namaste.co.uk/news](http://www.namaste.co.uk/news)**