

# FARTHEST CORNER OF THE WORLD

*Steak and wine aside, Chile surprises with its southerly Lakes District crammed with national parks, luxury hideouts and adventure sports – best enjoyed on a self-drive holiday.*

*By Low Sbi Ping*

STRETCHING ACROSS A DISTANCE of close to 340km, the Lakes District of southern Chile occupies the central part of the country and is demarcated by Temuco in the north, and Puerto Montt in the south. As its name suggests, the region stands out for its deep, clear landlocked water bodies that sparkle in the sunlight, often framed by majestic snow-capped mountains, many of which are volcanic.

Apart from the lake, expect to find a continuous chain of national parks that hide gems of flora and fauna. Unsurprisingly, adventure tourism options abound. Mountain biking, white water rafting and canyoning are examples of some of the adrenaline-fuelled activities on offer.

For the more sedate, the area also contains luxury retreats that organise hiking on gentle trails and guided horseback riding tours. Alternatively, opt to just stay on the veranda and soak in the natural views that each of the hotels have to offer.

A road trip in the district is easy to navigate. Perhaps the biggest challenge would be to keep the eyes on the road, what with its stunning but distracting 360-degree panoramas. Here are some recommended sights and activities for a 10-day itinerary with plenty of pit stops so even the driver will not miss out on any of the splendours.



**DAY 1**

Start your journey in Temuco. From there, drive two hours to Hacienda Hotel Vira Vira, which will be used as your base. A member of Relais & Chateaux, the property is known to offer the “elegance of adventure” with its all-inclusive stay in the Lakes District. Expect farm-to-table meals at its restaurant, and 23ha of parkland chock-a-block with lagoons, creeks and wildlife.

**DAY 2 & 3**

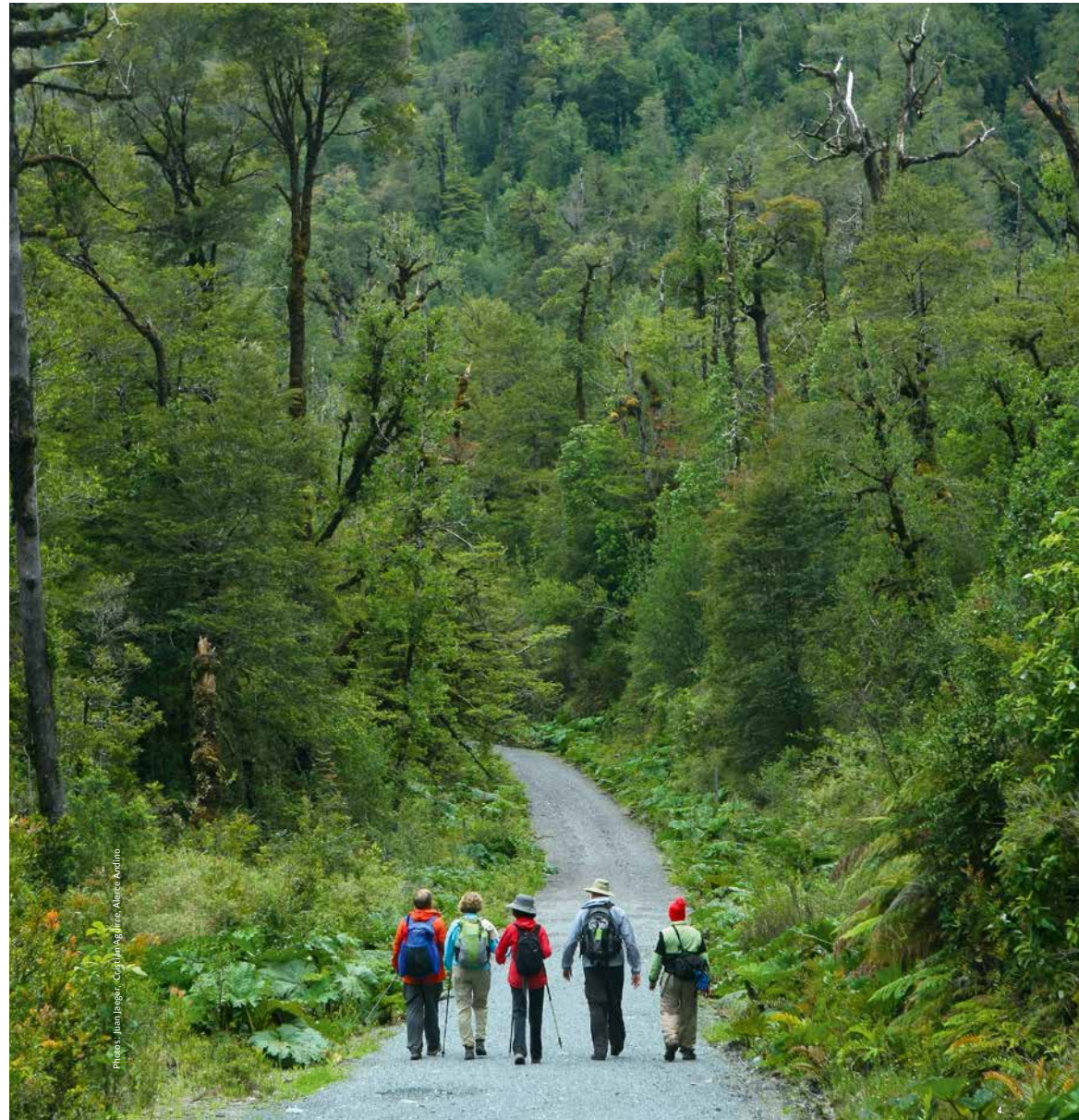
Spend the day at Pucón, an adventure tourism hub in Chile 30 minutes away from the hotel. Depending on the time of the year, it is possible to swim in the Villarica Lake, kayak, whitewater raft, ski, mountain bike and more. Thereafter, be sure to visit the natural and manmade wonder that is Termas Geométricas. An Asian-inspired, red-planked walkway is constructed over 17 natural hot springs that seduce with their gently curling mist. Meet the Chilean beaver along its nature trails, feed the dwarf goats at its farm, or go horseback riding to remote areas of the Cordilleras mountain chain.

**DAY 4**

The destination today is The Huilo Huilo Biological Reserve, a 100,000ha natural reserve and privately owned ecotourism project. It is located in the heart of the Chilean Patagonian Rainforest, in the shadow of the awe-inspiring Andes mountain range. The area is managed by the Huilo Huilo foundation that



1. KAYAKING ON THE PIRE HUEICO LAKE IN HUILO HUILO
2. PUCÓN - LAKES & VOLCANOES IN HUERQUEHUE NATIONAL PARK
3. A DOUBLE ROOM AT THE HACIENDA HOTEL VIRA VIRA
4. PUERTO MONTT NATIONAL PARK



Photos: Juan Jansgar, Cristian Aguilar, Alonso Ardino



5. PETROHUE LODGE  
6. ANCUUD PENGUIN COLONY

### DAY 5

Spend a second day at Huilo Huilo and hire a guide to soak in all that it has to offer. Activities include horseback riding, mountain biking, rafting, fly fishing and trekking. Consider hiking a night-time route to see the local nocturnal animals. All the excursions are focused on the stunning protected surroundings.

### DAY 6

Start the day early since the next destination is a four-hour drive away at Petrohué. As the kilometres fall away, spot the towering Osorno Volcano that also forms the backdrop of the charming Petrohué Lodge. Located on the shores of Todos los Santos Lake, the lodge resembles a home in a Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale and it is an excellent starting point for adventures around the area. Do not miss the raging Petrohué Falls and make time to sightsee along the banks of the emerald-coloured Todos los Santos Lake.

### DAY 7

Breathe in the fresh air in Petrohué and pick up the pace. Go rafting on the Petrohué River over the Petrohué Falls, hiking in the Alerce Andino National Reserve, or picnicking along the shores of the Todos los Santos or Llanquihue Lakes.

### DAY 8

Head for Chiloe island, a UNESCO World Heritage site known for its historic churches and colourful, stilted lakefront homes and buildings. One of the most unique accommodations in the area is the boutique hotel Tierra Chiloe, about 20 minutes away from the downtown of Castro city. The hotel is contemporary luxury both in its design and gourmet cuisine, and offers spacious rooms overlooking the water. In the evening, curl up by the fireplace in the cosy living room to relax and unwind.

### DAY 9

Roam the quaint island of Chiloe and take in the cultural aspects or natural bounty. Among the highlights on beautiful island include the Ancud penguin colony, protected historic churches, and be sure you sample a traditional curanto meal which involves digging a hole in the ground to light a fire and then placing heated stones over it. On top of the stones, ingredients such as seafood, meat and potatoes are layered in between leaves of the Chilean rhubarb, mimicking the effect of a natural pressure cooker.

### DAY 10

The port city of Puerto Montt is the departure point of the Lakes District adventure. If time permits, drop in at Chilean beef steakhouse Cotelé, where its chef is notoriously meticulous and famously skilled. Then drop off the car at the airport and either catch a flight back to Santiago or head south to Patagonia for another life-changing adventure. ●

This itinerary is proposed by AzA Journeys. For more information, visit [www.azasafaris.com/journeys/](http://www.azasafaris.com/journeys/)



works with the local community and entrepreneurs to protect, conserve and restore indigenous cultures and nature.

En route, skirt around the shores of the picturesque Calafquén Lake or take the longer way around and visit the Coñaripe Hot Springs on the edge of Lake Pellaifa.

There are several accommodation options at Huilo Huilo. The Montaña Mágica Lodge is one of the most unique hotels in Chile that looks like it is hewn into a mossy, vertical jungle-like hill, but is in fact entirely manmade. Access is via a rope bridge connected to the treetop walkway. Throughout the day, it sporadically spews water over its sides in an effort to emulate a volcano, which it is shaped after. Alternatively, there is the magical Nothofagus Hotel and the luxurious Lodge Nawelpi.



## NEW MENU

# Mediterranean à la carte

# Pasta & Pizza

6 pm - 10 pm, daily

  
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