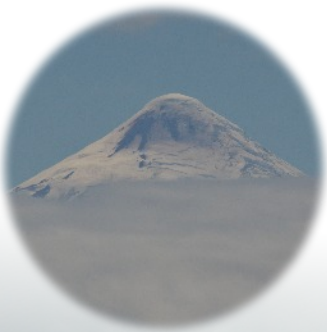




2012: Around Cape Horn



Acknowledgements

Photography

Nikon D5100

Additional pictures by Segundo & Luz Alvarez

Cartography

World chart by C-Map

Chart processing by SOB (Software On Board)

Google Maps

Travel Agent

Girovai

Proterra (Argentina)

Comapa (Punta Arenas)

Touristour (Puerto Varas)

Darwins Trails (Santiago)

Software

Serif PhotoPlus, PagePlus, AlbumPlus, MoviePlus

Photozoom Pro 4

The Ships

Stella Australis (Cruceros Australis)

Evangelistas (Navimag)

2012: Around Cape Horn

For years we had dreamed of going to Cape Horn. But the time had passed when we could hope to sail there in our own boat. Our friends Mike and Rosemary had made the trip using local cruise ships and ferries. So our plan was to come back from our Christmas in New Zealand via South America. Amazingly, it turned out to be far cheaper to come back to UK first, so that is what we did.

We had barely a week in a cold England before boarding the Air France flight to Paris that linked to the long haul to Buenos Aires.

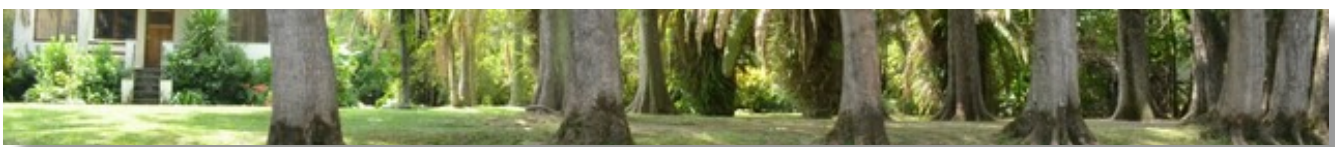
After a few days in B.A. We flew south to Ushuaia where we boarded a small cruise ship that would take us round Cape Horn to Punta Arenas in Chile.

Our travel agent, Anibal, who was working for Girovai, had then arranged a transfer to Puerto Natales. We would then take a one day tour of the Torres del Paine national park before joining the ferry that would take nearly four days to transit the 800 miles of the Patagonian channels before reaching Puerto Montt. Thereafter there would be a few daytrips before we flew home from Santiago.

Unfortunately, on our return Dairne fell ill, eventually suffering a stroke.

But by then we had completed the trip of a lifetime- one that complemented the trip we had made the previous Summer to Svalbard in the Northern hemisphere.





This was an adventure about which we had dreamed for years

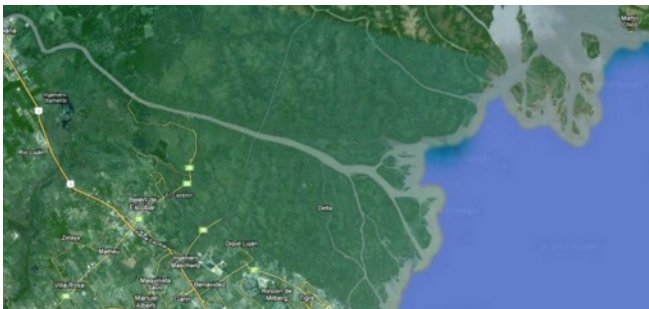
From Heathrow we flew via Paris to Buenos Aires on Air France.

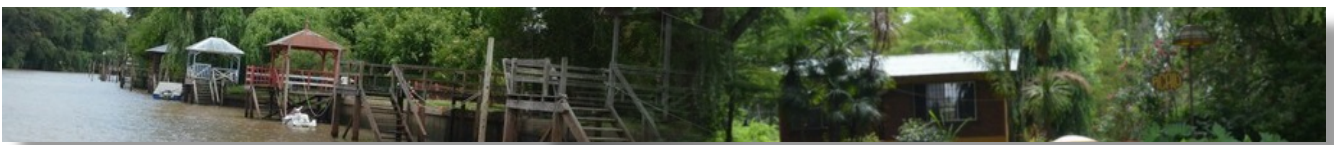
We had not been to Buenos Aires for 35 years. Remarkably, it was unchanged. The city built on a 100 metre grid greeted us as if we had never been away



Our first visit was to the delta at the head of the Plate Estuary where we took a launch from Tigre around the many channels.

Some 3000 people live in the delta and the only way of accessing their properties by boat.



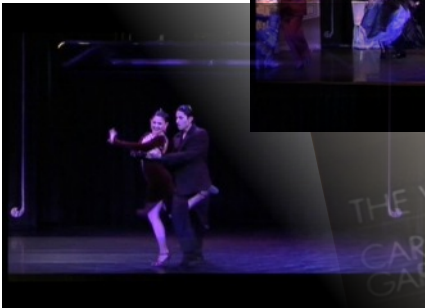


After a pleasant lunch in Tigre we made our way back to BA along the tree-lined avenidas.

The Sunday street markets in Buenos Aires were fascinating.



The next day after lunch in a cafe off Florida, we went to one of the best tango shows in town. The Carlos Gardel show includes an excellent dinner and a wonderful performance.



GOURMET

Starters

MAIN COURSES

Mi Buenos Aires Querido (1934) - Carlos Gardel / Alfredo Le Pera
Grilled boneless steak with golden mashed potato

Sus ojos se cerraron (1935) - Carlos Gardel / Alfredo Le Pera
Roasted atlantic salmon with andinlan potatoes in yellow pep

Ave sin rumbo (1935) Carlos Gardel / J. Razzano
Broiled chicken with mashed peas, laurel and tapenade of lea

Me da pena confesarlo (1926) Carlos Gardel / Alfredo Le Pera
Penne rigate with fresh tomatoes, basil and fried capers

Arrabal Amargo (1934) Carlos Gardel / Alfredo Le Pera
Sirloin and spinach stuffed ravioli, roasted tomato sauce and

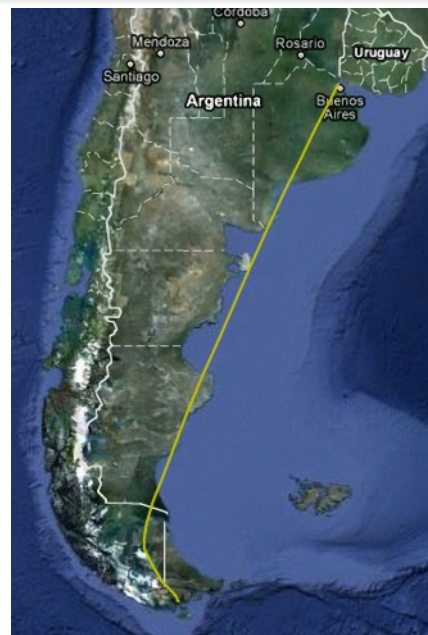
Going through the phone book I managed to find Daniel Olmedo, the lawyer with whom I had worked in Argentina 35 years previously. He was able to visit us in the hotel, and we had a wonderful reunion. Daniel remained as charming as ever.

Unfortunately our meeting was brief as we had to fly to Ushuaia the following day

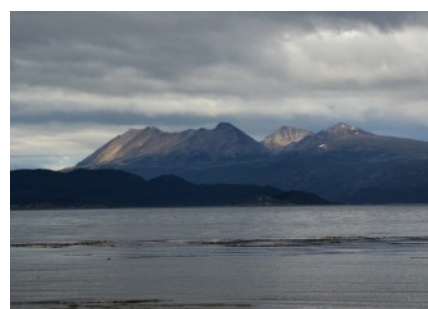
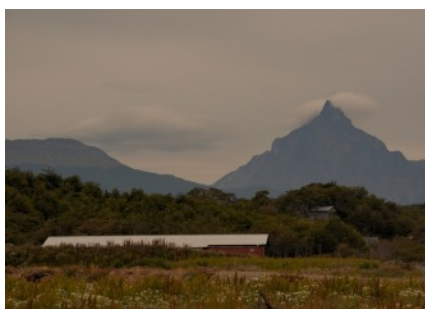




Our flight south was a transatlantic distance scheduled to take over 4 hours. In the event it took even longer because the ILS at Ushuaia failed so we had to go back to El Calafate, a small village NE of Rio Gallegos and near the Chilean border. For a while it looked as though we might even miss our ship!

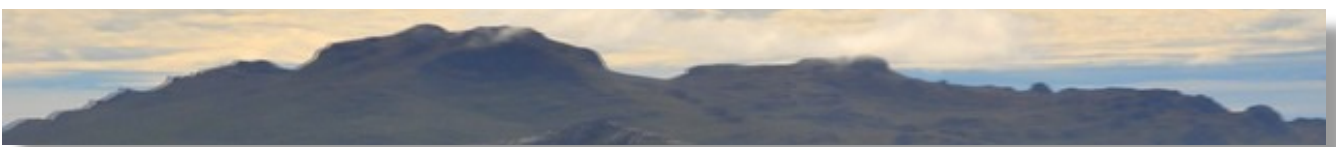


Our hotel, on the shore of the Beagle Channel had some wonderful views.



After a day wandering around the town, we joined our ship, the *Stella Australis*.





Much of the trip south was through the night, but eventually we re-anchored in the lee of Horn Island in the early hours of morning.

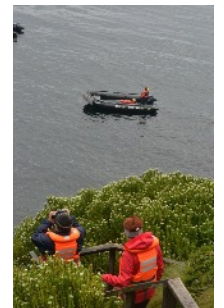


With 165 steps to climb, Dairne decided not to land on the Horn island. It was quite an experience, and there was a surprising amount to see including the beautiful albatross sculpture.

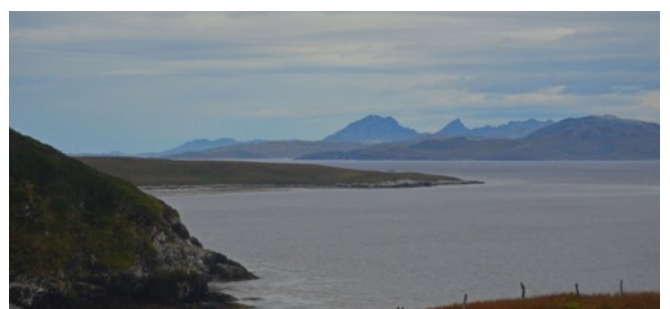


Amazingly, Cape Horn is designed for visitors!

Not only is there a viewing



gallery below the lighthouse lantern, but there is also a gift shop at the next level down.





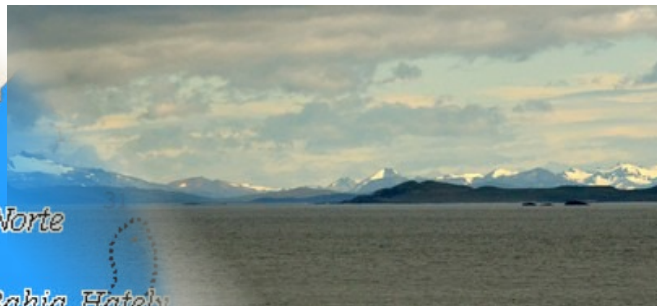
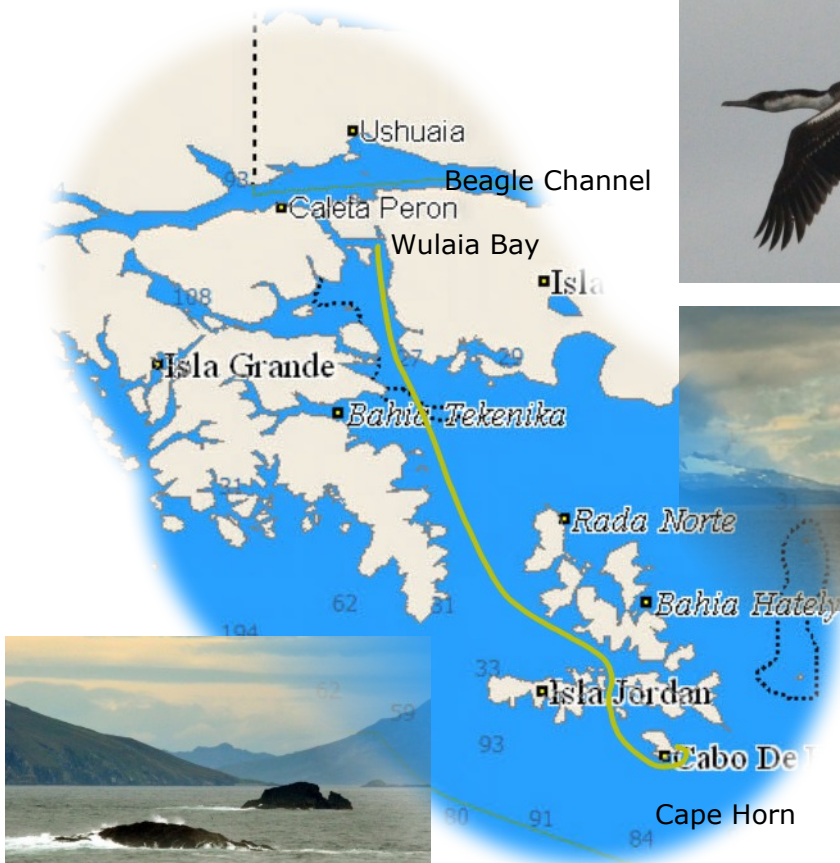




On one trip in four it is not possible to land on Horn island. And only on one occasion in ten is the weather sufficiently settled for the small cruise ship on which we were travelling to pass south of Cape Horn and up the west coast of Horn Island. We were lucky.



We could see the lighthouse and the sculpture, and a mile to the west we passed Cape Horn itself



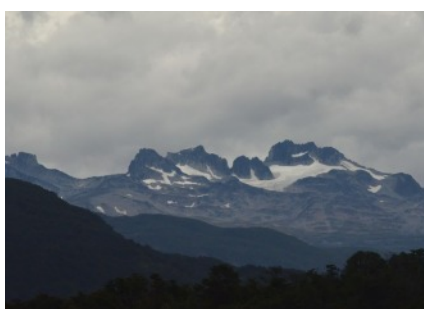
There were some unmarked rocks that the skipper clearly had to be careful to avoid.

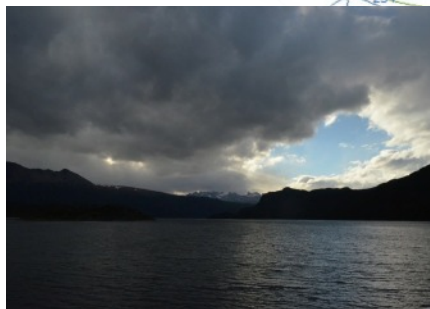
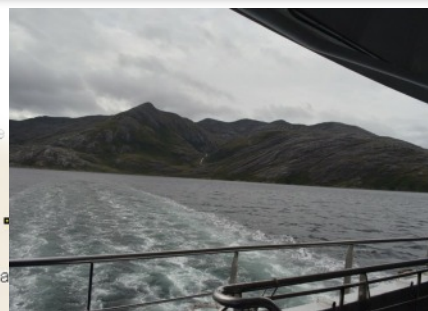
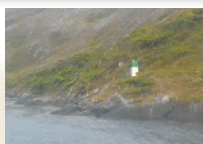




In the early afternoon we anchored off Wulaia Bay. This time Dairne decided to go ashore, even though it was raining hard. The displays in the museum described well the history of the area.

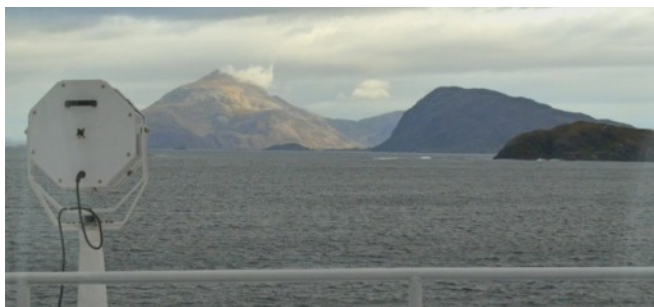
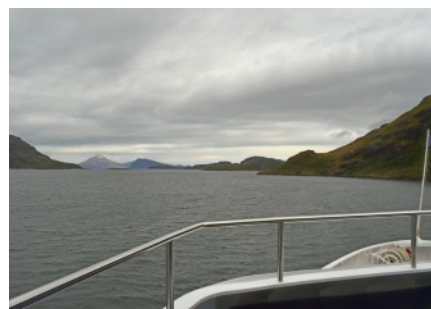
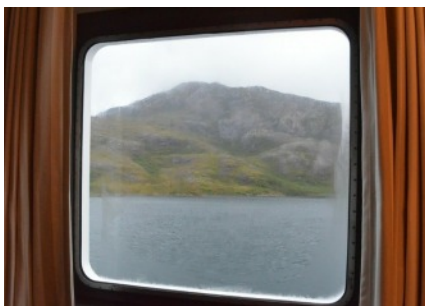
Fitzroy, captain of the *Beagle* (on which Darwin took passage) spent considerable time here trying to understand the Yaghan Indians. Sadly the introduction of European diseases such as measles was largely responsible for their extinction.





Darkness was falling as we left Wulaia Bay. So once again we did not see the Murray Channel. By dawn we were proceeding westwards along the Beagle Channel.

We had interesting views from the cabin and from the saloons on the upper decks.



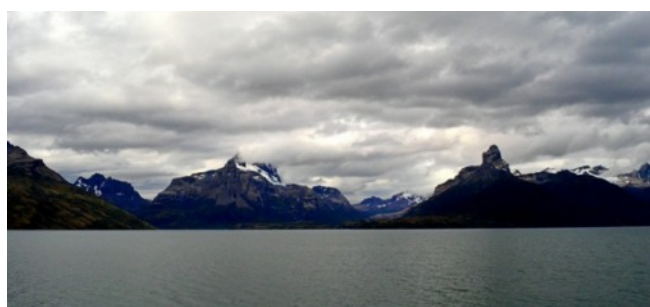
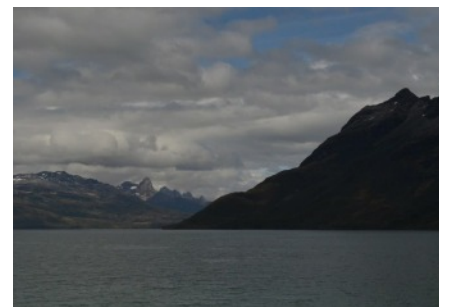
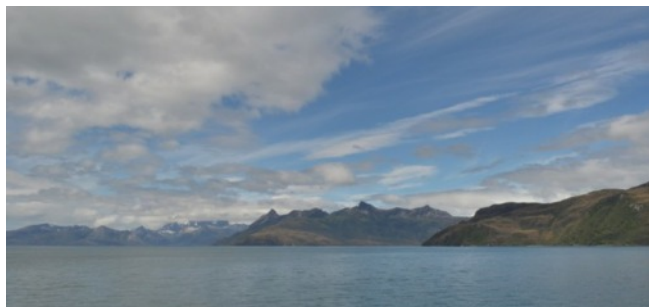
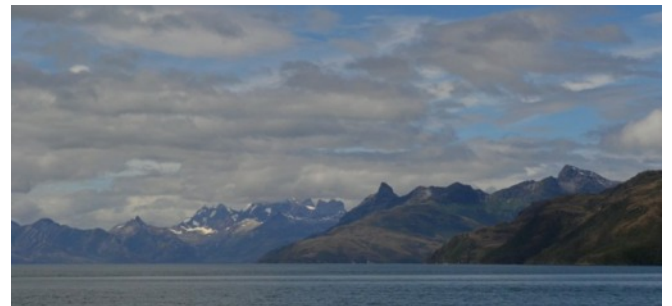
As we reached the western end of the Brecknock Pass, the ship started to pitch gently as we emerged briefly into the open Pacific before turning northward into the Cockburn Channel.



The mountains flanking the Cockburn channel were incredibly dramatic. We turned off into the Seno d' Agostini where the ship stopped near the Aguila glacier so we could disembark.



There are three major icefields in Chile. We were approaching the most Southerly Darwin field which covers much of the largest Fuegian island.





After we landed, the ship went further up the fjord to anchor.



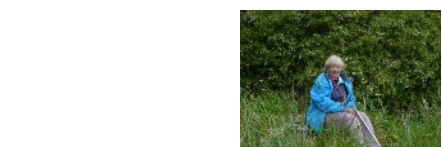
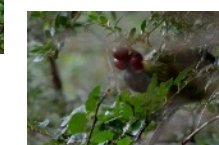
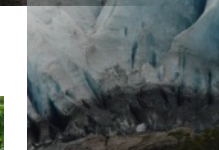
At our landing place there was no sign of the glacier at first.



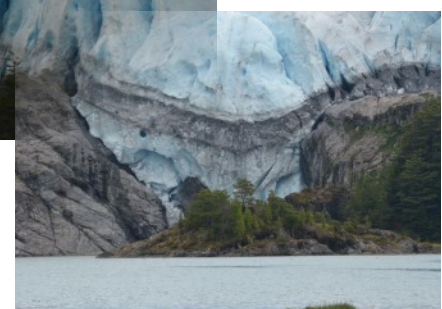
Instead we were flanked on the landward

side by rain forest, resplendent with flowers and birdsong.

As we turned the corner the huge glacier appeared before us.



The trees in the bottom picture give a sense of scale

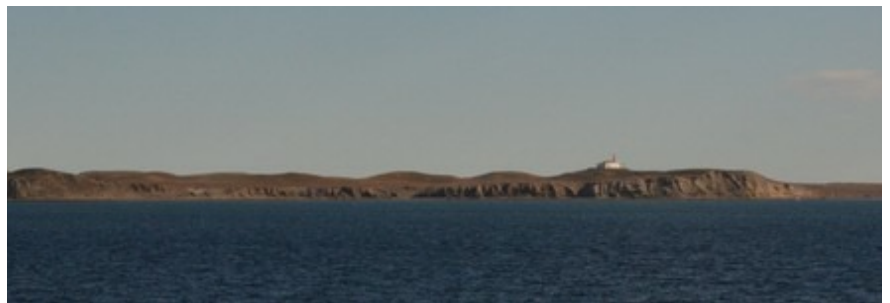




After the stop of two or three hours at the glacier we re boarded the ship and started to head north back towards the Magellan Strait.

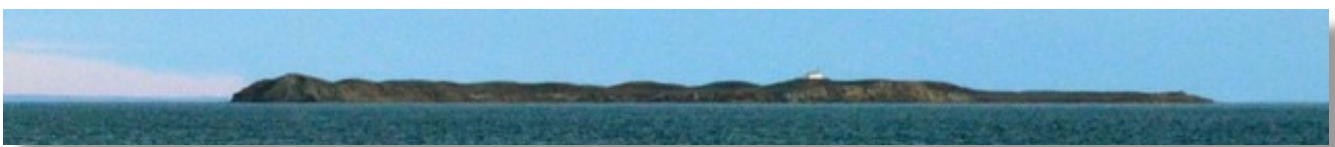


That evening was the last that we spent with our friends with whom we had shared a dining table for the trip



We landed on the rather barren Magdalena Island so we would see the Magellanic penguins at close quarters.





Every
few minutes a
group would assemble
on the shore and as if
someone gave a signal,
they would simultaneously
launch themselves into the
water,





A delightful visit! They are the most engaging animals. The site was beautifully managed so that the birds did not appear to feel threatened, but we could get close to them.

There were young being fed.





In the coffee lounge on the ship there were beautiful models of Shackleton's *Endeavour* and Fitzroy's *Beagle* on which Darwin was the scientist.



We had enjoyed our few days on *Stella Australis*. Being relatively small she could get into tiny bays such as Wulaia. Dairne managed to cope with the absence of lifts.

As we approached Punta Arenas, a school of dolphins put on a display. I mused on whether penguins formed part of their diet!

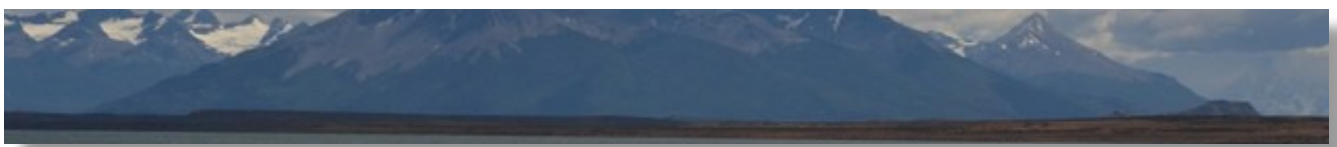


As the ship approached the berth a gust caught the bow. The pilot had to back off and make a second attempt.

Our hotel was close to the dock. We would spend only one night there. As it had the atmosphere of a disco it was probably just as well. However, we had been booked into a spacious room with disabled facilities. Dairne found these most useful.

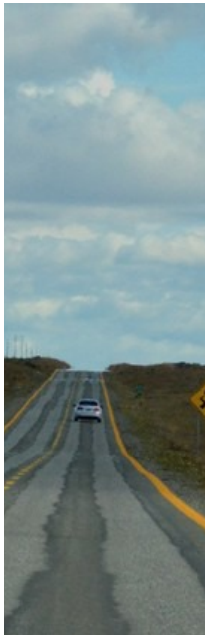


That evening we had an excellent meal at a nearby restaurant that had been recommended to us by Segundo, one of our table companions from the ship, (and a resident of Punta Arenas) had recommended. As we walked back to the hotel, we saw the beautiful Ford car (above) -obviously attending a wedding reception at the hotel.



We had achieved our main goal already. We had been to the Horn, and because of the luck of the weather we had actually rounded it!

We had a car with driver and interpreter to take us of the 80 miles north from Punta Arenas to Puerto Natales.



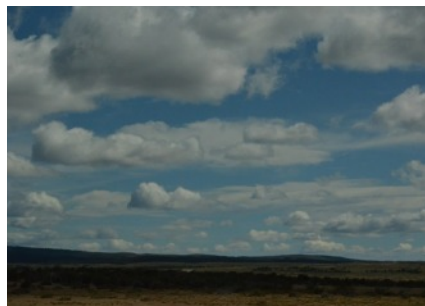
By the roadside we saw some Rheas. Dairne had often seen the name as a the crossword clue, so it was interesting to see the birds in the wild. It seems that the female Rheas lay their eggs then leave the male birds to



bring up the family.

We were surprised to see flamingos

The prairie like country seemed very empty and the sky seemed very big.



Apparently this part of the border with Argentina is still mined, dating back to the tensions between Chile and Argentina at the time of the generals and the Falklands war.



We had not realized how colourful the Ibis can be



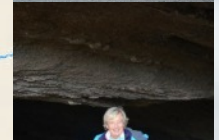
We got our first glimpse of guanacos. There are numerous families of this llama like animal throughout Southern Chile.



On reaching Puerto Natales we checked into the rather strange Indigo hotel. We were rather fascinated by it.



The next day was reserved for the tour of one of Chile's most important national Parks known as the Torres Del Paine. We had never heard of it and were simply following the travel agent's recommendation. It turned out to be an extremely worthwhile visit.



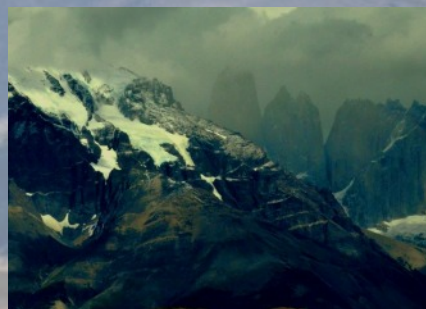
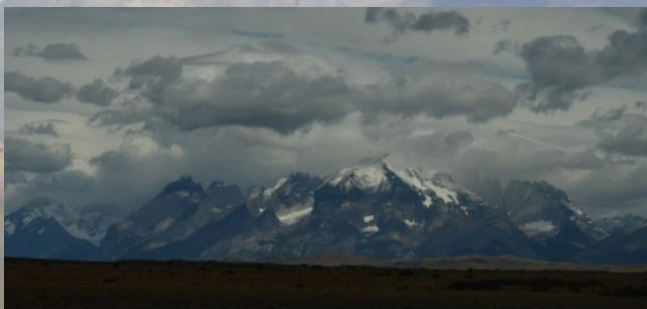
The bus then took us further north towards the mountains.

Suddenly the bus pulled over because the driver had spotted a group of condor. As we got closer we realized that they were just finishing stripping a carcass

We were in a small bus carrying about 20 people, and our first stop was at the cave of Milodon.



Through the bus window we got our first glimpse of the towers. Luckily the cloud was just above the tops.



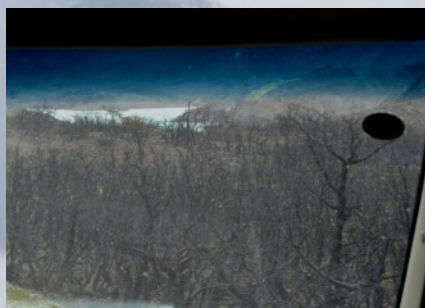


Gradually as we closed in on the mountains the sheer scale and grandeur of this range was impressed upon us

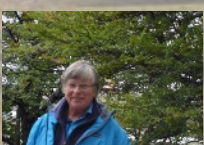
There were several families of guanaco about. Often one animal would be slightly separate from the rest standing on a vantage point where apparently it was the lookout for puma.



It was sad to see the severe damage that had been caused by the bush fire a couple of years previously, which has clearly adversely affected both the park and its wildlife.



There was a stop so that the passengers could visit a glacier, but it was some way away from the bus and we decided that the walk would be too much.





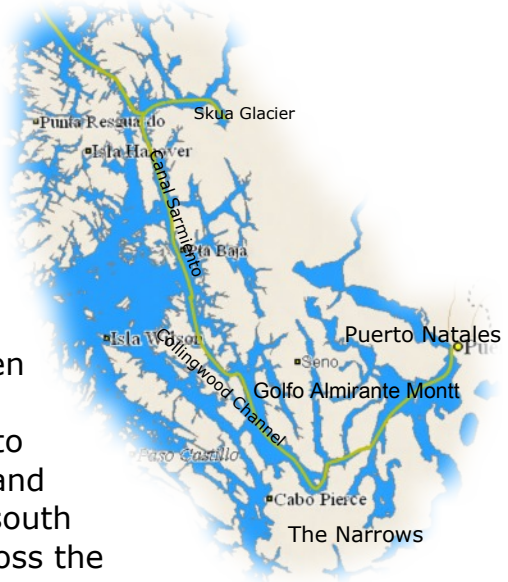
As we returned to Puerto Natales we were told that the boarding time for the ship had been advanced. We rushed to pack our things and check out of the hotel. Passengers were expected to walk to the ship, a distance of several hundred yards. We pointed out that this would be difficult for Dairne, so she travelled in the baggage vehicle. I sat on the baggage in the back!



Our ship was the *Evangelistas*, a fairly elderly roro ferry to which a limited amount of passenger accommodation had been added. This was to be our home the next four days during our 800 mile trip through the Patagonian channels.



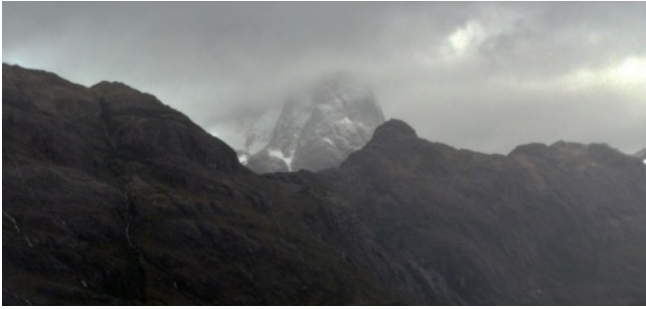
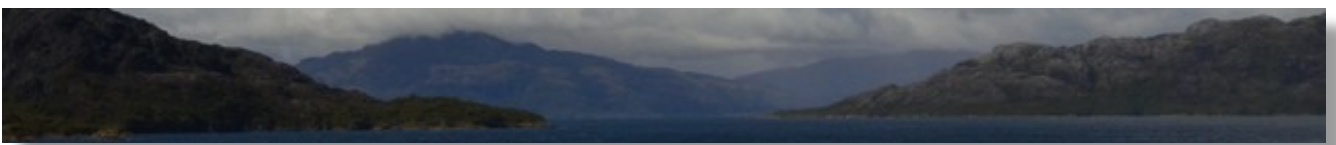
It was dark when the ship left Puerto Natales and headed south west across the Golfo Almirante Montt



Early next morning the ship slowed as it approached the narrows, which apparently would be the narrowest passage that the vessel would make him the entire

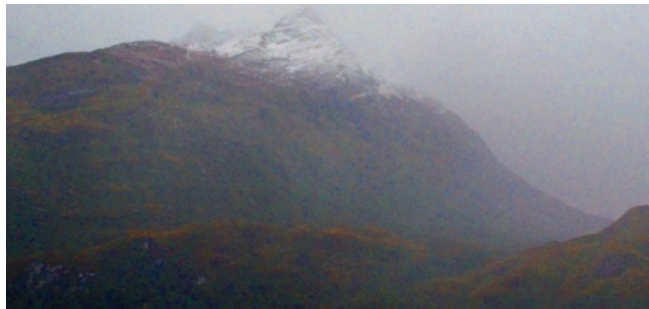
voyage, with currents of up to 10kts. It was certainly a fascinating bit of pilotage to watch.





In this area it rains on about 270 days a year, which can make viewing the scenery frustrating.

Glimpses of the peaks through the clouds can be very dramatic.



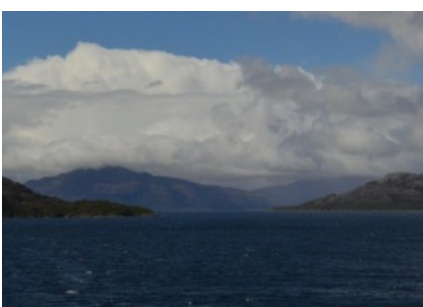
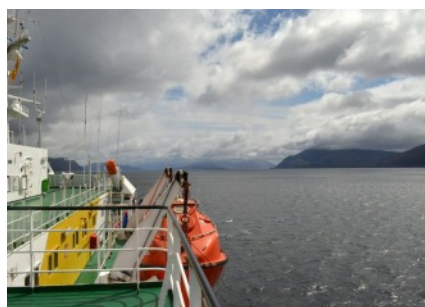
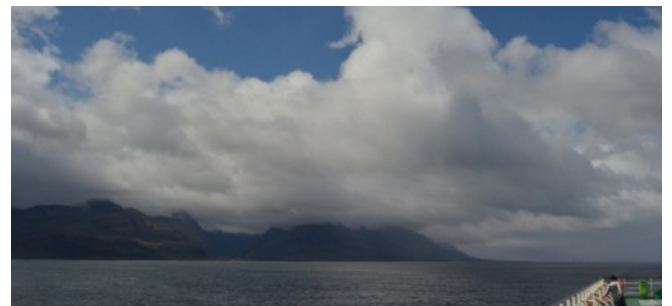
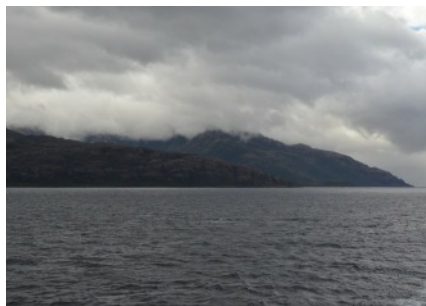
All the passengers could fit into this rather small canteen area for the safety briefing from the captain.

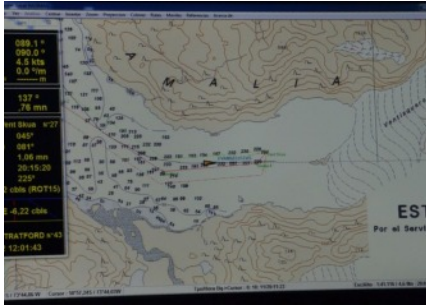
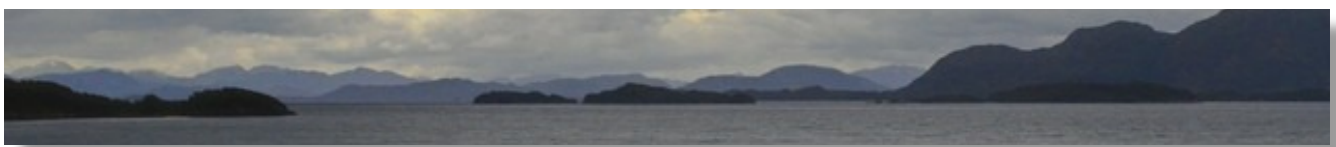


Many of the passengers were backpackers. They were a fascinating bunch to talk to.



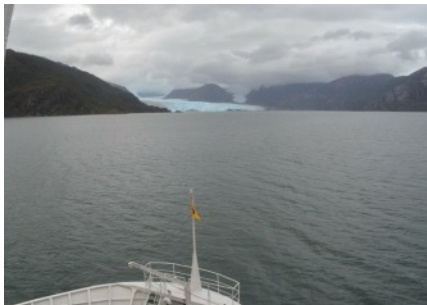
The sky gradually lifted as we made our way northward.



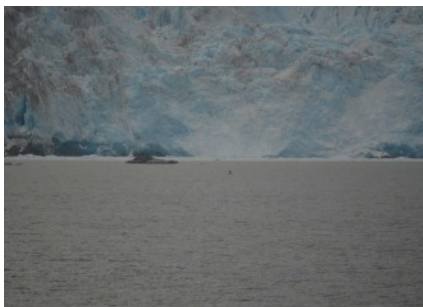


The ship made a diversion to visit the Skua glacier.

The chart above is typical of many that we saw on the bridge. The number of soundings is quite limited, indicating that the area has not been fully surveyed. This shows the fjord at the bottom of the glacier which is to the right of the chart.

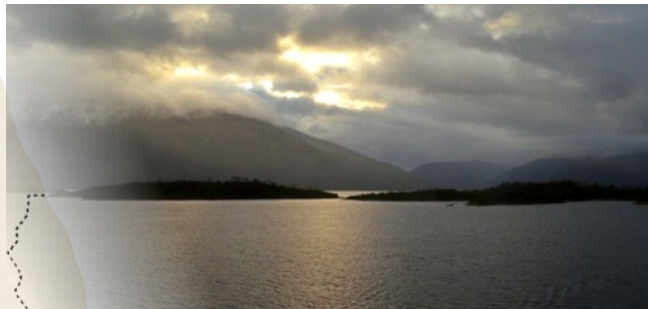
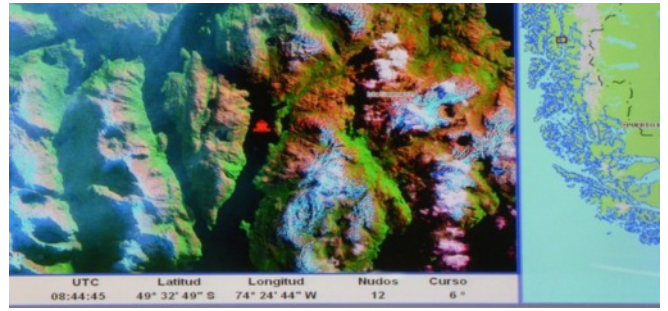


There was not a great deal of room to manoeuvre, and the captain took personal control of the ship, which manoeuvred right up to the base of the glacier.





At several locations in the ship screens like this gave the position course and speed. As I had lost my camera fitted GPS, the only way that



I could unravel all the channels when it came to write this Log was to simply photograph the screens several times a day.



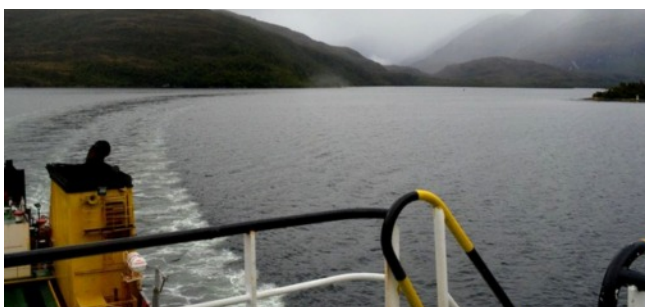
So far we had seen no sign of human habitation. The whole area is empty rugged countryside.

Eventually however we approached the little

community of Puerto Eden. It was to be the only township that we would see during the whole voyage.

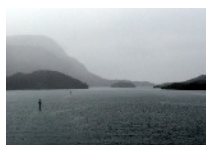
Briefly the ship anchored off while passengers and cargo were ferried ashore in large outboard powered dinghies.

Then once more we resumed our northward journey.

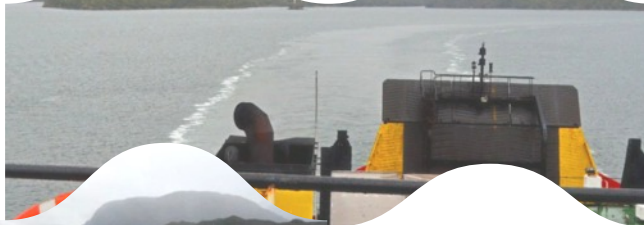


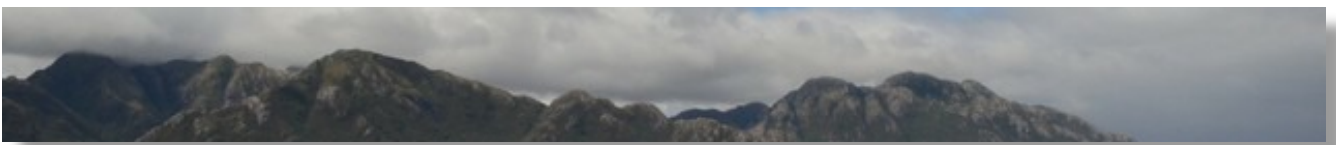


Within a short period we came to another narrow and twisty section known as Angosturas Ingleses. This was another area where the pilotage was fascinating.

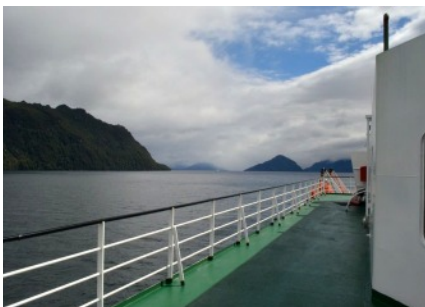


I remain grateful to the captain for drawing track lines on my photographs!





The channel widened into the Canal Messier where we saw one of the most extraordinary things. Most of this channel is several hundred metres deep, but right in the middle wide section is a wrecked ship sitting on top of a rock pinnacle. Apparently there is another ship underneath it!.



The closeness of our track to the wreck shows how steep sided the rock pinnacle is.

This was one of the more spectacular waterfalls and we saw.



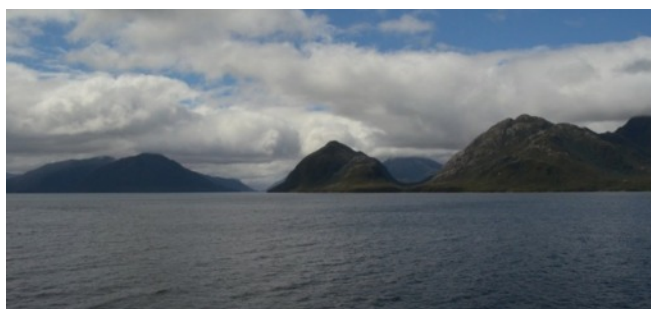
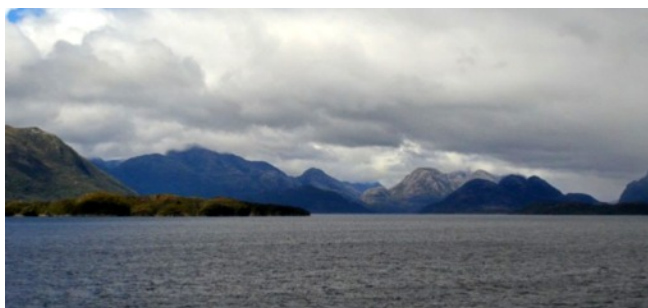


For the first time we saw signs of other shipping, though these cruise ships would be far too big to go through the small channels that we had navigated, and would be forced out into the open ocean instead.



The ship on the left, *Silver Spirit*, is memorably ugly - we had last seen her in Bay of Islands, New Zealand.

The other ship is called *Seven Seas Mariner*



We had seen several navigation marks in the channels, but this was the first substantial lighthouse we had seen (below), though we passed it at a range of a couple of miles.





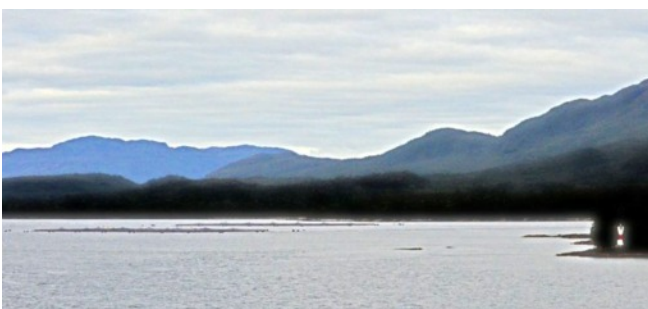
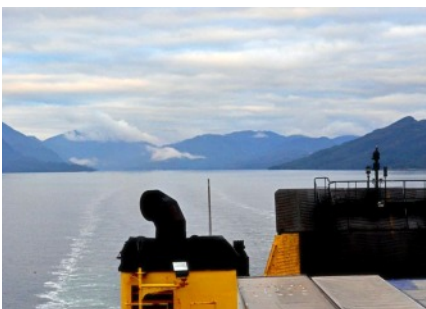
For a few hours we would be in the open sea. Forecasts of waves up to five metres high turned out to be unfounded, though one or two Swiss passengers found the gentle rolling of the ship uncomfortable.

Blue whales have been sighted in this area, but we were not to



be lucky although we did see a very active pod of the much smaller minke whales.

For several hours the ship made its way round the headland through the night. By dawn we were well back into the channels. Vegetation was beginning to look a bit more lush, and we saw the first signs of fish farms.

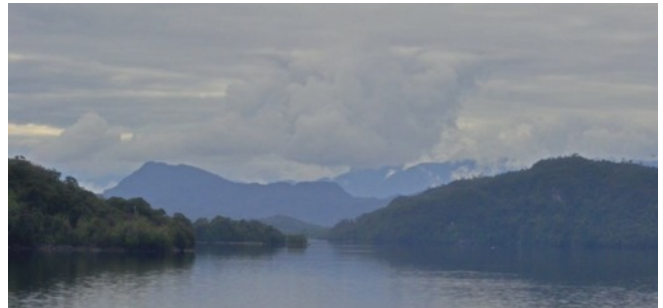




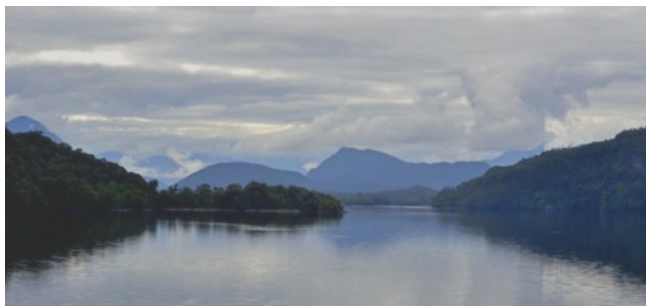
There was a large flock of Magellanic penguins. Apparently they were often seen at this location, but nobody knew where the roost was.



As the weather had been more benign than forecast, the ship was running slightly

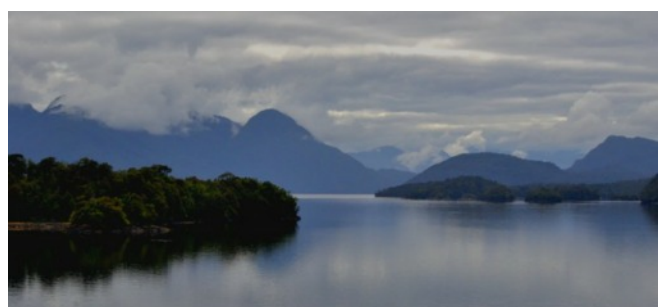


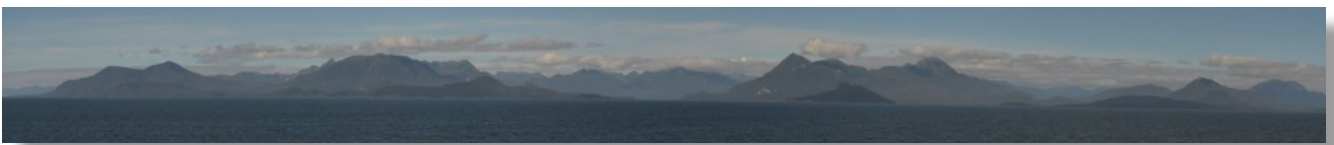
ahead of schedule and the captain announced that he was going to make a small diversion via the canal Rodriguez in the hope of seeing more wild life.



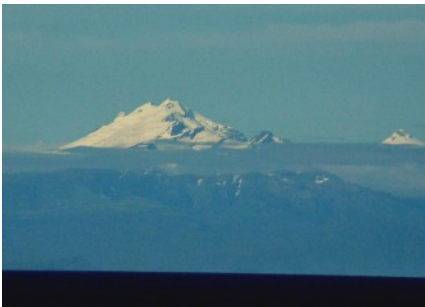
The cormorants were ever present.

A large pod of dolphins came swimming rapidly towards the ship, but for some reason I could not get the camera to auto focus properly.





On our starboard side we were beginning to see more of the Andean Range.

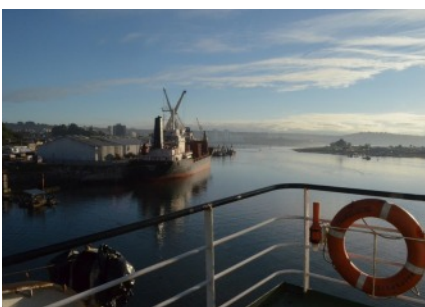
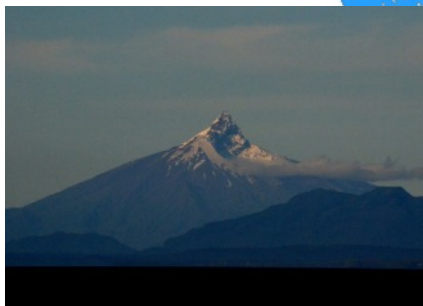


We were now getting much further north, but still had another 100 miles to go while the

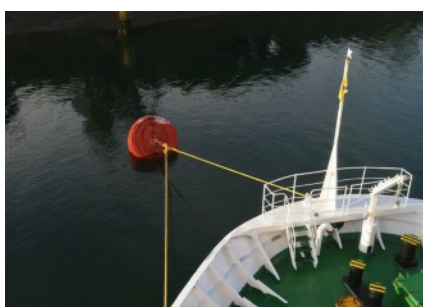
ship passed between the island of Chiloe and the mainland during the night.

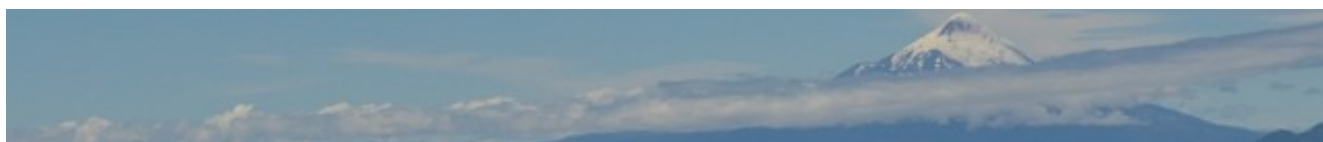


The weather was now much clearer and we got some fascinating views of snow capped peaks and the mainland.

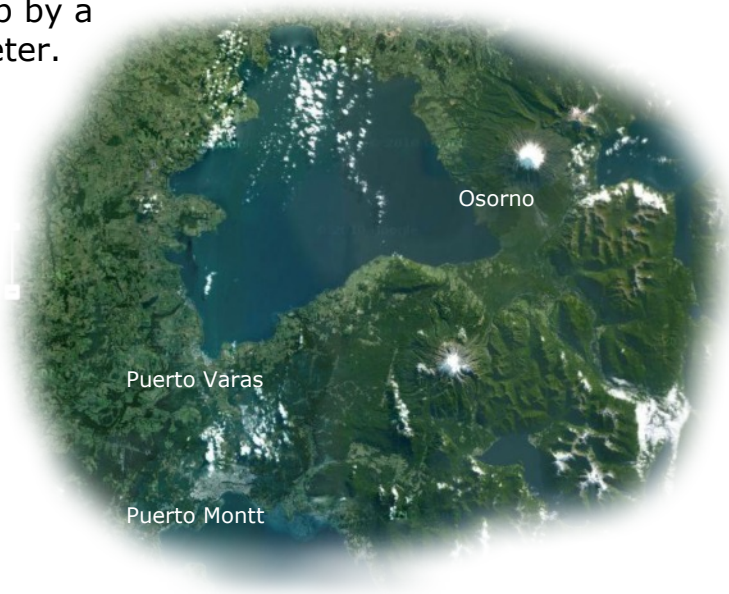


Eventually the ship made fast in Puerto Montt, the bow being attached to a buoy with her stern at right angles to the quay



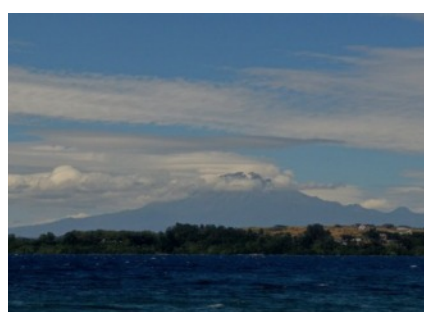


We were met direct off the ship by a small mini bus with an interpreter. We went through Puerto Montt which is a busy and bustling town, then on to the much quieter and rather delightful town of Puerto Varas. The trip took about an hour.



Our hotel was on the shores of the lake looking across to the impressive volcano, Osorno.

We had reached the end of the cruise phase of our journey.



That evening our friends Mike, Rosemary and Alastair arrived at the hotel after an adventurous trip over the Andes from Mendoza in Argentina. Previously they had done the trip we had just completed and had been our inspiration.

The next morning we went our separate ways.

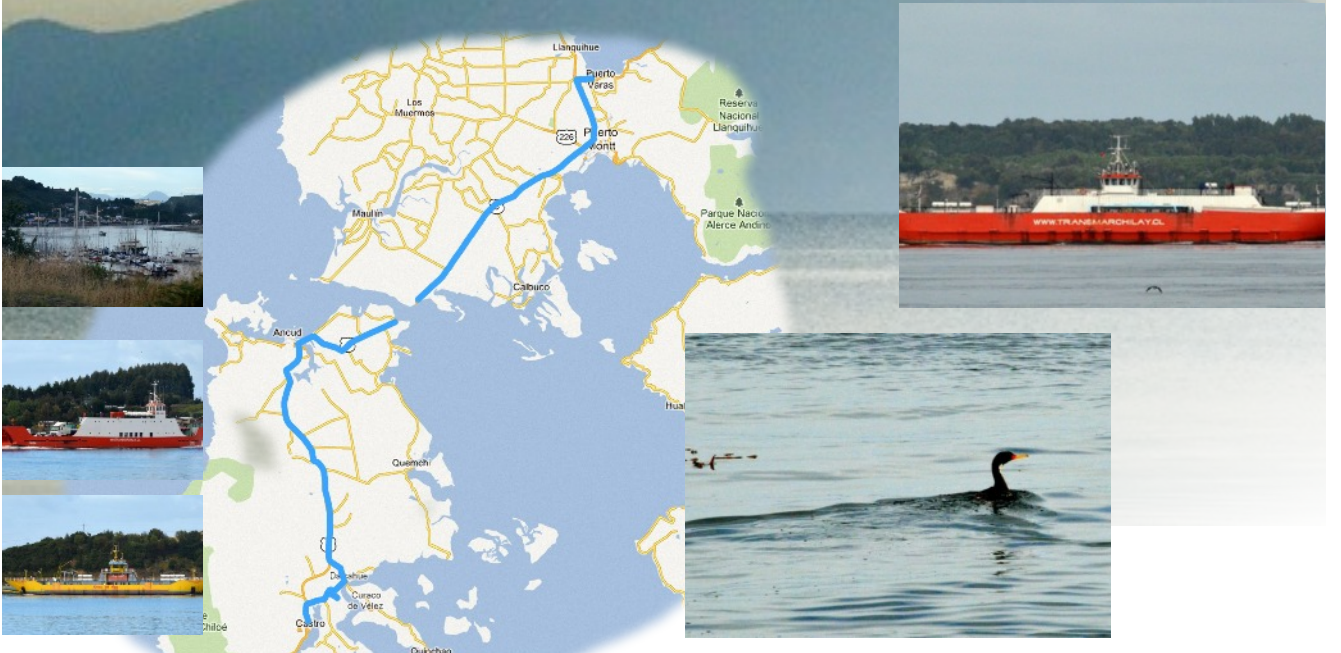


Anibal, our travel agent, had suggested a few day trips that would give us a chance to see some other aspects of Chile.

The first two would be based out of Puerto Varas. We would then fly up to Santiago where we would have another two expeditions before flying home.

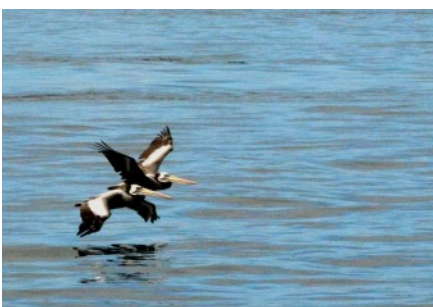
The classical volcano shape of Osorno dominates the view from Puerto Varas. We were due to visit it on the second day of her stay there. However our first trip was by a coach to the island of Chiloe.

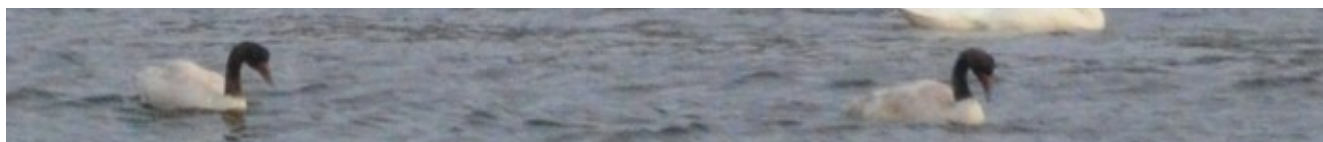
Initially the coach retraced our steps from the previous evening back through Puerto Montt and then on southwards towards the ferry crossing to Chiloe.



The crossing itself was interesting, partially because of the wide variety of ferries operating on this short route, but also because the tide was flooding hard and there was a huge

variety of wildlife chasing fish including cormorants, seals, and pelicans.





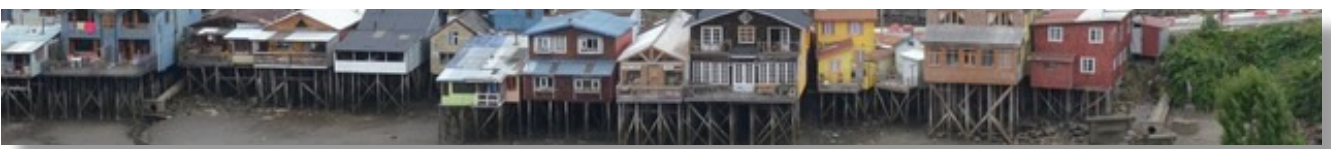
After landing the bus travelled the short distance to the little town of Ancud where there was a fortress built to keep the British out.

The useful relief map of the island of Chiloe (below) was in the town museum, with north to the left. In total the island is about 100 kilometres long. There were a number of other fascinating maritime exhibits in the museum.



The bus made its way south to the little fishing village of Dalcahue, where they were celebrating Dalcahue's 120th festival and we experienced the local folk music. There were several fishing boats anchored off, and we saw the first of many examples of the local technique of building out over the water on piles. The local church was delightfully simple in its structure with some quite beautiful details.





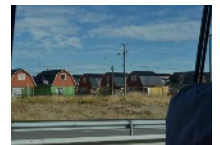
Lunch was a short drive away at a new hotel which was at the end of a narrow twisty and quite a long track. It was nevertheless a delightful meal in pleasant surroundings.

The bus made its way up the twisty track and on to the main road before heading a little further south to Castro the capital town of Chiloé. We were quite tired and did not venture much beyond the main square.



We saw some further examples of local houses built almost entirely on piles over the water

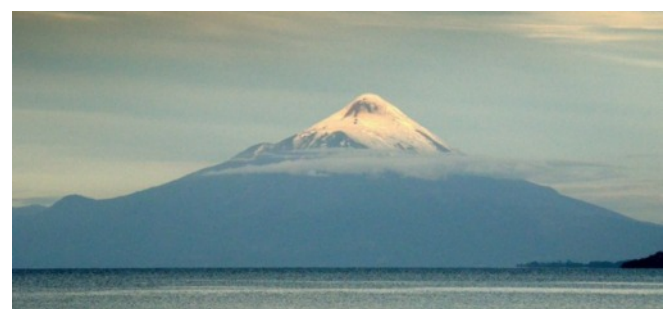
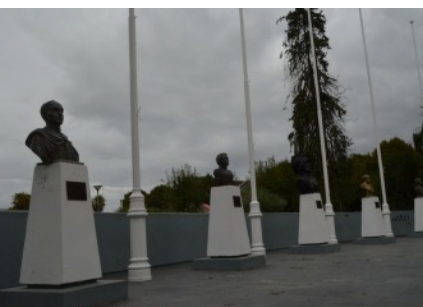
The bus retraced its steps on the long journey back to the ferry



In the area around Puerto Montt we saw some of the new subsidized housing with which the government is trying to attract people to come and work in the area (right). After Norway, Chile has the highest level of farmed salmon production in the world, and this is the main area for its production.

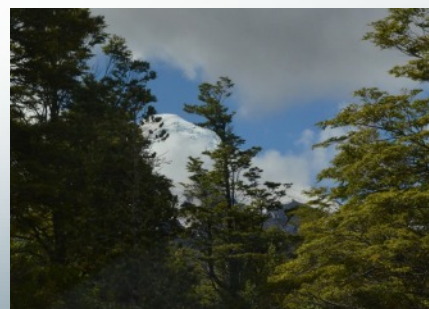


Eventually the bus returned to Puerto Varas and the view across the lake to Osorno.



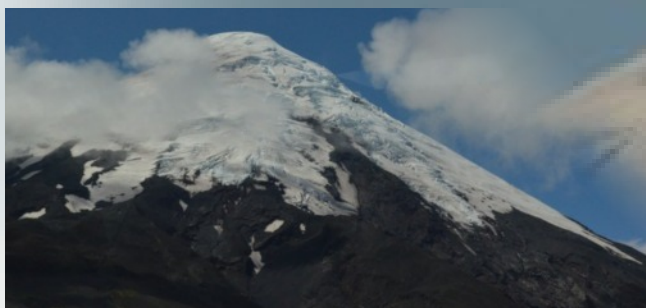
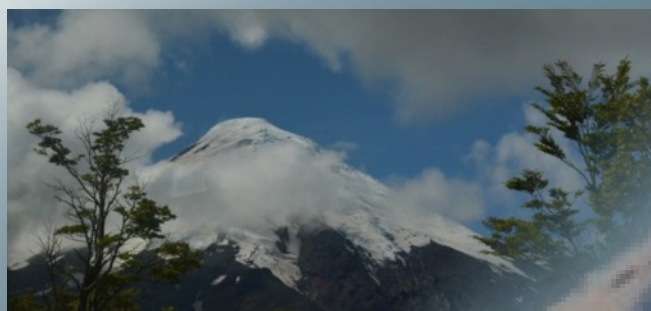


After a fairly relaxing day in the town we joined an afternoon trip to Osorno



As we neared the volcano cloud cleared from the top and we managed to get some impressive views of the snow covered peak.

The bus wound its way up the mountain until it reached the ski lodge at a height of about 1200 m

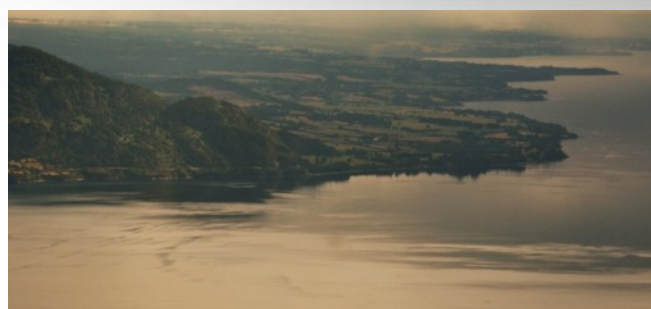


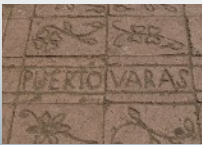
We decided to go up the chairlift though neither of us had ever travelled on one before. Getting on to the moving chairlift proved quite an adventure for Dairne and on her first attempt she ended up in a heap lying across the attendant. He stopped the ski lift put her into a chair and she successfully made the round trip. When she reached the bottom he helped her off. Obviously they were great friends. I could do nothing except watch.



The cloud base was just above us and the views across the lake were all that we had expected them to be

Back down the zig zag road and along the Lakeside to the hotel. The cloud was now down on Osorno, so we had been lucky.





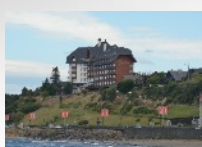
The next day, our flight to Santiago was in the late afternoon so we sat in the park listening to Ramon, the pan pipe player whose playing is used for some of the incidental music to my video.

Our lunch was at a small restaurant that one of the guides had recommended.

We had a full asado which is a kind of barbecue meal. Far too large but very good.

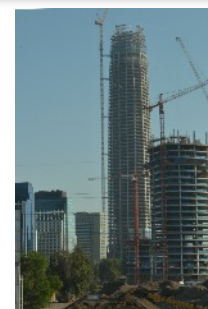
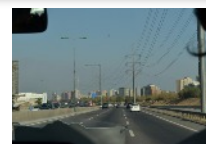


We were taken to the little airfield just outside Puerto Montt to board the 1 1/2 hour flight to Santiago.





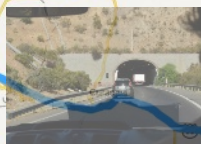
It was getting dark as the taxi drove across Santiago to our hotel, but we could see that it was a bustling and modern city with some amazingly tall skyscrapers, particularly when you consider that this is an earthquake area.



Our first trip from Santiago was to the classic coastal town of Valparaíso.

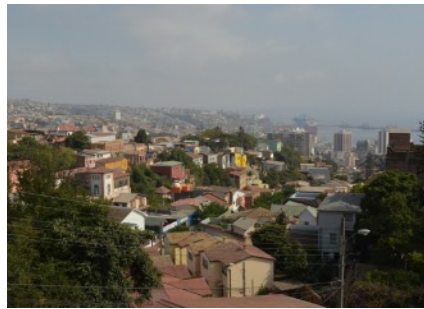
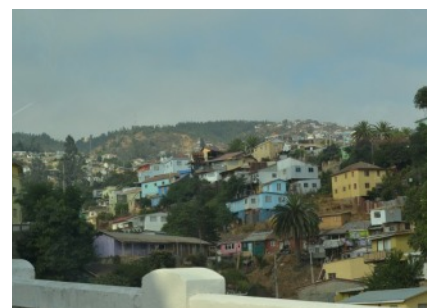
We were hardly out of the city when we saw a massive copper mine still being worked

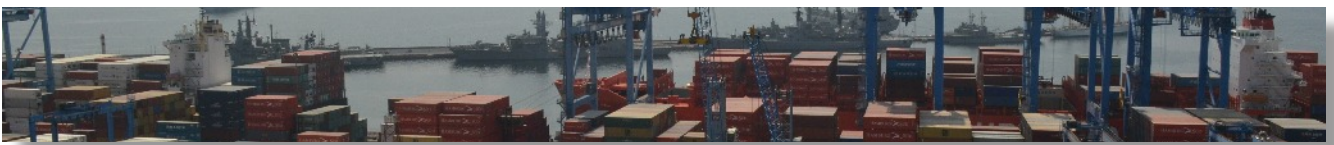
Nearly all the main roads in Chile are tolled and had been fairly recently built using Spanish finance



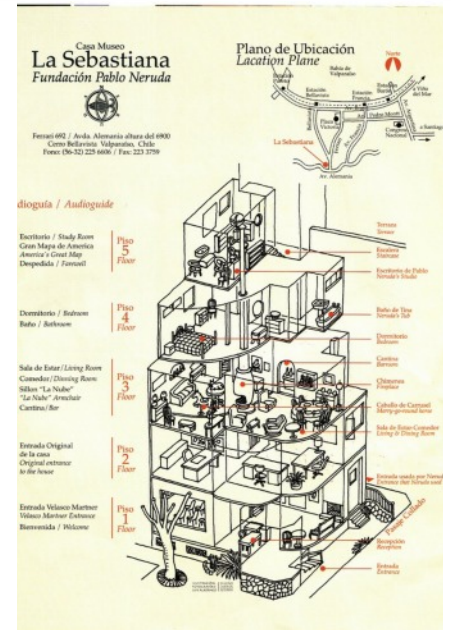
Just after an hour from Santiago we crossed the Casablanca Valley which the Chileans claimed to be one of the best white wine growing areas in the world. Sadly we did not stop there

Valparaíso turned out to be an incredible jumble of buildings piled one on top of the other and clinging by their fingernails to the steep hillsides.





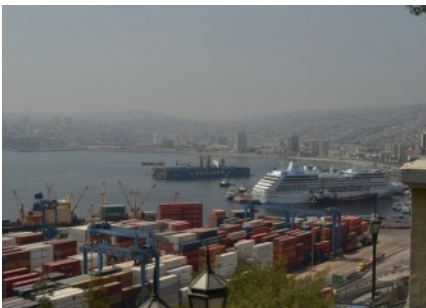
Our first stop was at the rather strange house of the Chilean poet and communist politician called Neruda. He is still widely revered in the country and the house is almost a shrine to his memory. His poetry sounds rather strange to our ears.



The bus wound its way up and down the hills and

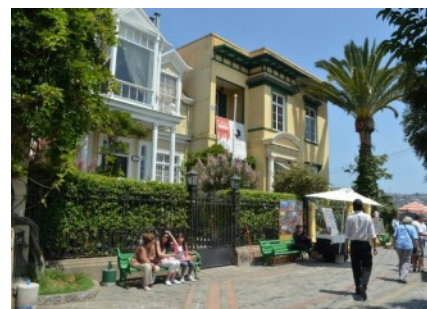
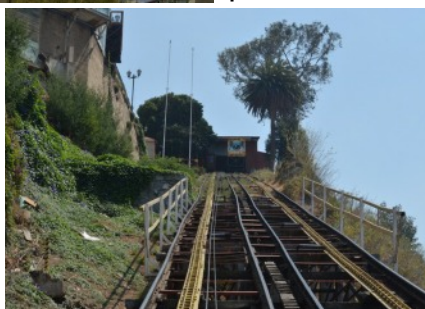


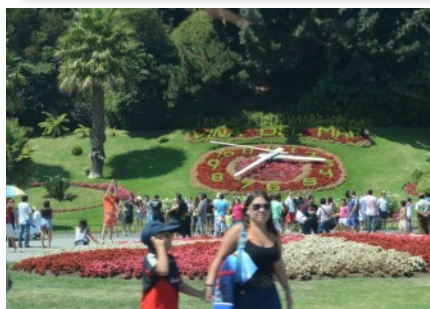
through the business district near the centre of the town where we saw the magnificent naval building - Valparaíso is the headquarters of the Chilean navy. It is also a busy port.



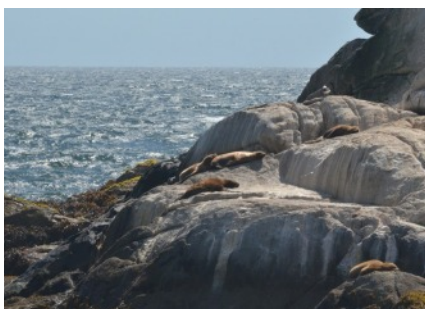
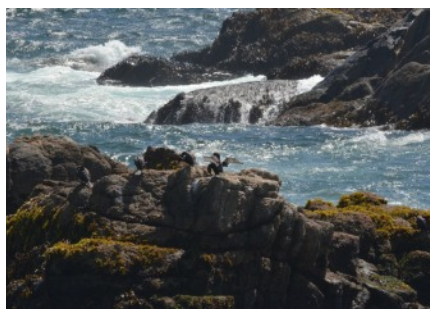
In total there are seven funicular railways to help the locals get to and from work and give the tourists a scare

Some parts of the town like this one have been designated as a world heritage site. It was in this area that we had another pleasant Chilean lunch.





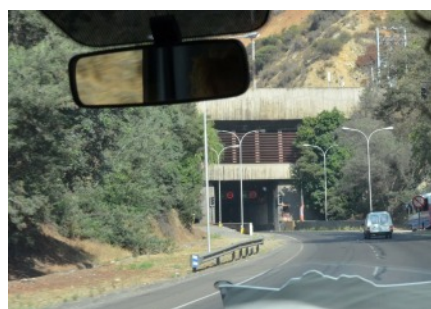
After lunch the bus went round the bay to the Benidorm like Vina Del Mar. It had a completely different atmosphere; so relaxed that even the sea lions seemed to enjoy it

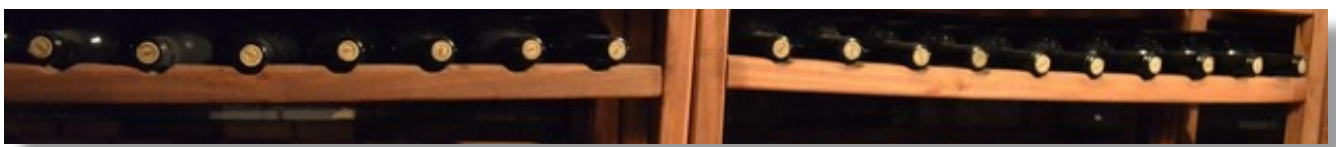


For these trips from Santiago, Christian was our interpreter and guide and Paulina was our driver. Both of them were especially attentive to Dairne

As we were about to leave Vina Del Mar we were reminded by the existence of this local museum that Easter Island, way out in the Pacific, is a Chilean dependency. Sadly we did not have time to inspect the museum.

It was then a long haul back to Santiago for the night.





Our second trip from Santiago travelled south for about 3 hours to the Colchagua valley, which the Chileans claim to be among the best areas in the world for growing red wines, although they do tend

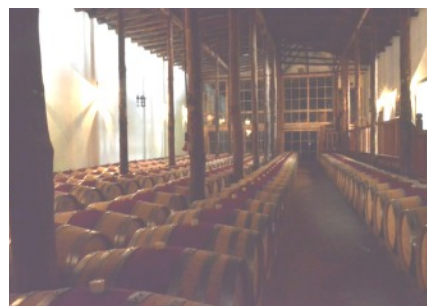


to acknowledge that the Argentine Mendoza wines represent an extremely strong challenge.

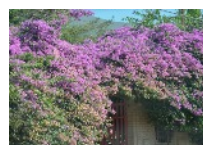


Once again it was south along the toll roads. There are wayside stalls and extensive orchards as well as vineyards

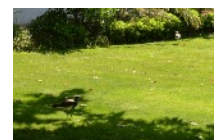
Our first stop was at the Casa Silva vineyard, which has been established for many years.



The owners other passion is a collection of vintage cars.

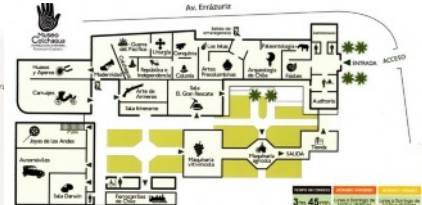


This was the first place that I encountered, Carmanere wines which are unique to Chile





After leaving Casa Silva we made our way round the edge of San Fernando and on to the town of Santa Cruz where we stopped for lunch. Once again the magnificent meal including a beautifully cooked piece of Chilean steak.

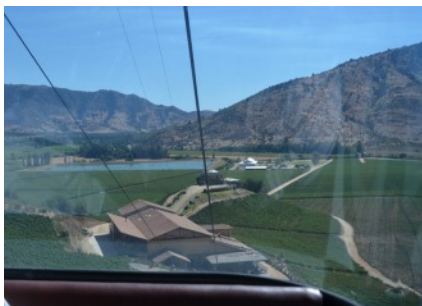


After lunch we visited the local Museo Colchagua. This was stuffed full of local history and culture, but we were both tired and could not cope with more than a 1 hour visit. Most fascinating was a special exhibit that had been put together about the rescue of the 30 Chilean Miners.

Another half hour drive brought us to Vina Santa Cruz. This is a new winery very close to the Colchagua Valley in which modern wine making techniques are used.

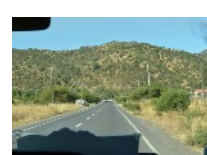


First we went up their private funicular to get an overview of the area sheltering ourselves from the sun in a house built in the style of the Mapuche Indians



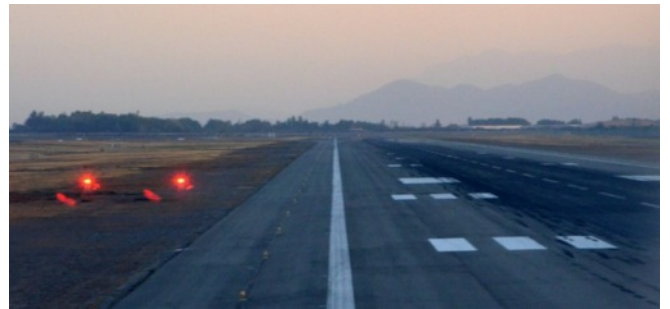
During this tour we learnt a lot about the distinction between ordinary Chilean wines and reserva wines.

We now faced the long drive back to Santiago. Interesting, but quite a strain for Paulina who must have worked a 14 hour day. She didn't seem to mind.

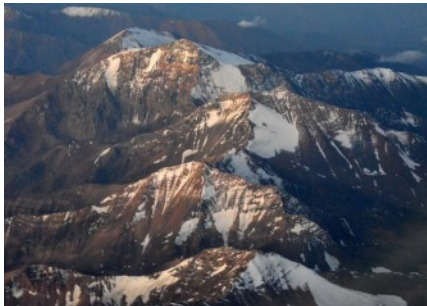




As our flight out of Chile was not until the evening, we were able to meet Anibal our travel agent for lunch and thank him for all the excellent arrangements that he had made.

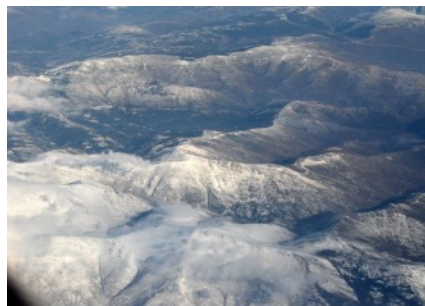


It was getting dark as we crossed the Andes but the low evening sun did illuminate



some of the peaks. We were flying LAN Chile because Air France were on strike. If anything the service was even better. At Madrid we swapped to Iberia for the flight to London.

Europe was covered in snow!



Unfortunately a couple of days after getting home Dairne fell ill and eventually suffered a stroke ending up in hospital. How lucky we have been that this had not happened during our wonderful and exciting trip to South America.

Happily, by June, Dairne had made considerable progress from when these pictures below were taken.

