

MARCH, 2014: PATAGONIA
PART III - PUNTA ARENAS, TORRES DEL PAINE & LOS GLACIARES NATIONAL PARK



Wendy found that the ropes would not do a good enough job at anchoring her to the earth, so she attached herself to lamp posts at every opportunity.



After being spewed out onto the streets of Punta Arenas to fend for ourselves against the 90 knot winds, we found that the city had kindly placed ropes along the sidewalks to aid in keeping us earthbound.



Our local guide gave us a short tour of the town square park, showed us how to rub Patagonia toes for good luck and calm winds, and then let us fend for ourselves until we all met up for a nice lunch in a nearby restaurant.



So from lamp post to lamp post we got a short tour of Punta Arenas and a nice lunch before boarding a bus to our next port of call in Puerto Natales.



Just outside of Punta Arenas, there is an open air museum of boats. You can see the Strait of Magellan behind the boats and how rough it is with 100+ mile per hour winds.

The smaller of the two boats in the above photograph is a full size replica of the James Caird, the modified life boat that William Shackleton used in his epic voyage to rescue his stranded expedition party in the Antarctic.

The voyage of the James Caird was a small-boat journey from Elephant Island in the South Shetland Islands to South Georgia in the southern Atlantic Ocean, a distance of 800 nautical miles (1,500 km; 920 mi). Undertaken by Sir Ernest Shackleton and five companions, its objective was to obtain rescue for the main body of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition of 1914-17, trapped on Elephant Island after the loss of its ship Endurance. History has come to consider the James Caird's voyage as one of the greatest small-boat journeys ever accomplished. The sea conditions you see behind on the Strait of Magellan in this photograph would have been considered light conditions on that epic voyage. You can read more about that voyage here:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voyage_of_the_James_Caird

There was a recent PBS special, Chasing Shackleton, about a recreation of that voyage with equipment used back then. A link to that is here:

<http://www.pbs.org/program/chasing-shackleton/>

The other boat, the schooner Ancud, was the ship sent by Chile in 1843 to claim sovereignty over the Strait of Magellan. It was built for the purpose in the city of San Carlos de Ancud and commanded by John Williams Wilson a British born Chilean captain. You can read more about that here:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chilean_schooner_Ancud_%281843%29

The main boat at the museum is this boat. By my standards it is a ship only if in calm waters, otherwise it is a small boat. Anyway, it is a full size replica of Magellan's boat, La Victoria, a very important part of Chilean history, much like our Christopher Columbus.

You can see a short video tour of La Victoria with the link below link to YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VqHne-RdC48>



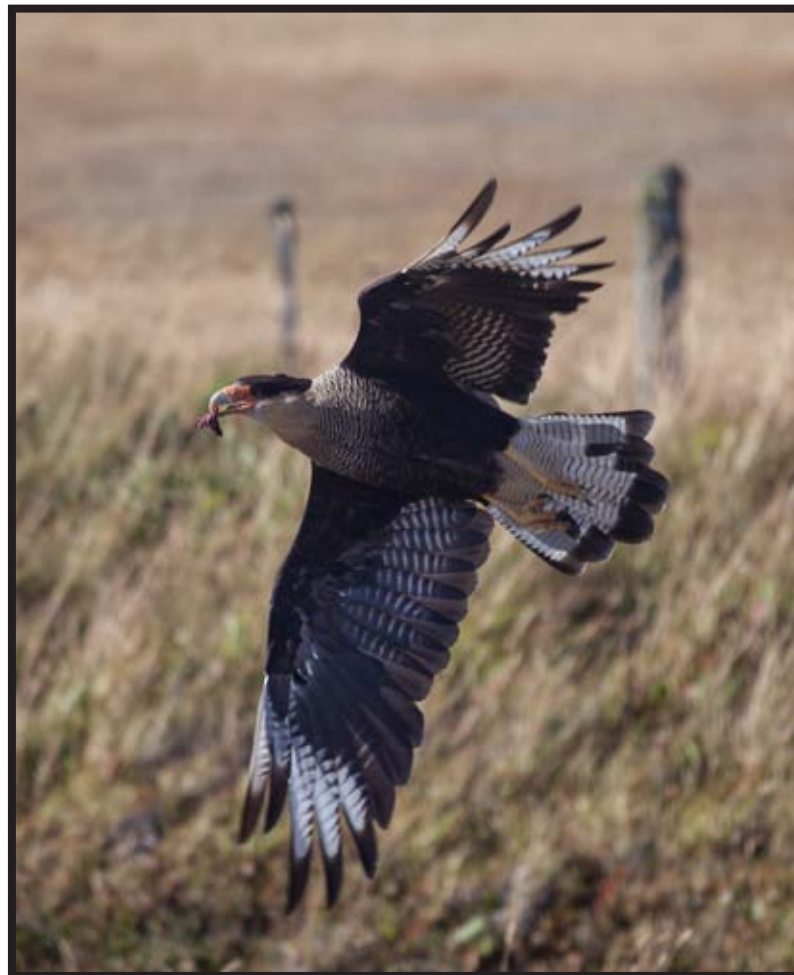
The winds made it easy to read the advertising on the flags the Punta Arenas area favored over bill boards which fair poorly in the windy environment. Our main bus just could not take the wind and busted some engine part pushing through it. We pulled over to the side of the road where the driver attempted repair but found the problem more than what could be fixed right away. Serendipitously, a smaller tour bus just happened to come up behind us in a few minutes, empty and headed to our destination. We switched the luggage and people over and headed on our way...



The Patagonian Emu, we were told they taste like chicken...



I believe this is the Crested Caracara with a bit of Emu?



The locals taking advantage of the free and constant Patagonia breezes, take part in the ever popular activity of Patagonian Pole Dancing.



Our guides making do without the poles...

We had only one evening and then morning in Puerto Natales. That morning before our repaired bus caught up with us and we headed north to Torres del Paine, I took an early morning walk along the waterfront to photograph.

I got some nice photographs that I intend to paint from, but was cut short by this fellow's extreme lack of enthusiasm for tourists. I am pretty sure he said something like "*another #&@*ing tourist!*" when I tried to make a nice portrait of him...



Torres del Paine

Entering Torres del Paine, more of the common Crested Caracara waiting for tourists to succumb to the elements.



Guanacos and the Torres del Paines plains...



The weather was not as cooperative as I would have liked in Torres del Paine, but I knew going in that weather there is generally extreme and non cooperative, so I was more than willing to take what, if anything, the weather gave up to me in the few short hours our tour was there.

These images are Torres del Paine and what it's extreme weather offered me. I will have to live with the imagery a bit more and reflect more before making a final judgement of the results... but for sure, Torres del Paine is a place where I would love to spend a lot more time.





Los Glacares National Park

(El Calafate, Argentina)

We battled strong winds back across the Andes into Argentina, enduring the dueling countries tit-for-tat border crossings, searingly wasting several hours in the waste lands of both Chile and Argentina. The bus was limited in the speed it could travel due to the high (albeit, normal) winds.

We arrived in Calafate late afternoon and spent the next day in Los Glaciares National Park at the Perito Moreno Glacier.

A massive glacier, (but not the largest), that was constantly calving. I caught a couple of calvings in a sequence of photographs but have yet to figure out just how they might be shown and presented.

The clouds and sun were constantly moving about on the mountains, but for the most part the sun was out all day.

As we had planned, we were able to meet up with our Williams Lake, BC friends Tim & Evi Halpin in El Calafate for some catch up time and a great meal at the best restaurant we ate at on all of this adventure, (and that includes some really nice places and in Buenos Aires). If you are in El Calafate, Argentina try to eat at La Tablita, but do call for reservations. You can check it out on the link below:

<http://www.la-tablita.com.ar/>



As well as the glacier itself, the clouds rolling in and out of the peaks above the glacier provided some great opportunities for photographs too.



The Perito Moreno glacier has 97 square miles ice formation and is 19 miles in length. It is one of 48 glaciers fed by the Southern Patagonian Ice Field located in the Andes system shared with Chile. This ice field is the world's third largest reserve of fresh water.

The Perito Moreno Glacier is one of only three Patagonian glaciers that is growing. The reason remains debated by glaciologists. The terminus of the Perito Moreno Glacier is 3 miles wide, with an average height of 240 feet above the surface of the water of Lake Argentino. It has a total ice depth of 558 feet. You can read more about it here:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perito_Moreno_Glacier



And that my friends, ends our Patagonia adventures....

We will board our tour bus in El Calafate once more, head to the airport and our return to Buenos Aires where we will spend a few more days before heading to Miami, Florida.

The next Flying Pig Adventures will be of our time in Buenos Aires, both before and after the tour... and where, after Wendy and I's tango lesson, we performed for the first time at a night club!



.END of this issue of the *Flying Pig Adventures*