Eagle-Eye Tours



Patagonia Photo Tour Trip Report (Apr 2026)

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Argentina

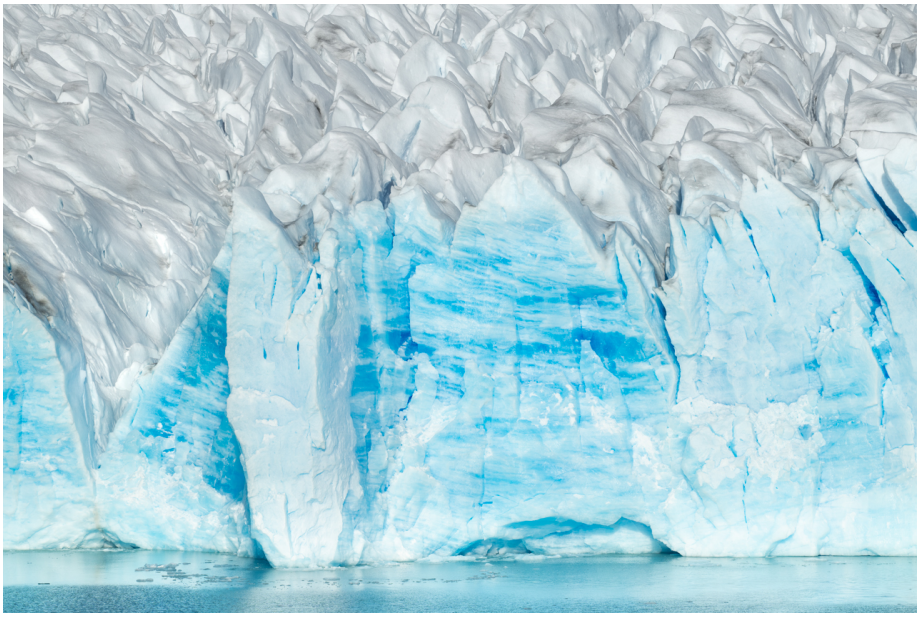
Upon arriving in El Calafate, Argentina, after a long flight it was clear that it had recently snowed and rained heavily. The Andes to the west were dusted with snow and the streets in town were a patchwork of puddles. Now it was sunny. This is normal weather in Patagonia, however, this year's photo tour wouldn't be typical. Several participants backed out due to health concerns and the tour was running with only one guest. This fortunate gentleman would be enjoying a private tour with myself! We had our own rental car for the Argentine portion then would have a driver, Robert, in Chile. It was a close-knit crew but we did miss sharing this incredible part of the world with other guests.



Alpenglow Andes © Steve Ogle



South Arm of Lago Argentina



Perito Moreno glacier © Steve Ogle

On the first morning we drove to the Perito Moreno Glacier in Los Glaciares National Park. On the way, we stopped to photograph the alpenglow on the Andes and icebergs in the south arm of Lago Argentina, showing incredible blue colours in contrast with the brown steppe in the background. At the glacier we were treated with a backdrop of rusty orange and red, since fall colours were at their peak. Of course, the backdrop isn't the highlight at the viewpoint! It's difficult to comprehend the sheer magnitude of ice in one viewscape. Interestingly, the front of the glacier was the farthest away from the viewing platform that I've seen in over 20 years of visiting the area. Also, one bird species that is normally very elusive, the Patagonian Tyrant, was in flocks along with others such as Austral Parakeet and Tufted Tit-Tyrant. After this introduction to Patagonia, one memory card was already full and continued north to El Chalten while the weather continued to be sunny.



Tufted Tit-Tyrant © Alex Uram



Cerro Torre © Alex Uram



Snow Mushroom © Steve Ogle

Since we had the smallest group possible, we evaluated the potential for an extended hike and the conclusion was we were ready for a 10km one-way jaunt. Thus, we started out in the dark to get a start on the shorter day length at this time of year. Our destination was Lago Torre, and to get there we ambled through incredible *lenga* forests of various colours. Cerro Torre's prominence was evident the entire way, but it's not until you arrive at the lake that you can make out the details of the spire, including the infamous ice mushroom at the

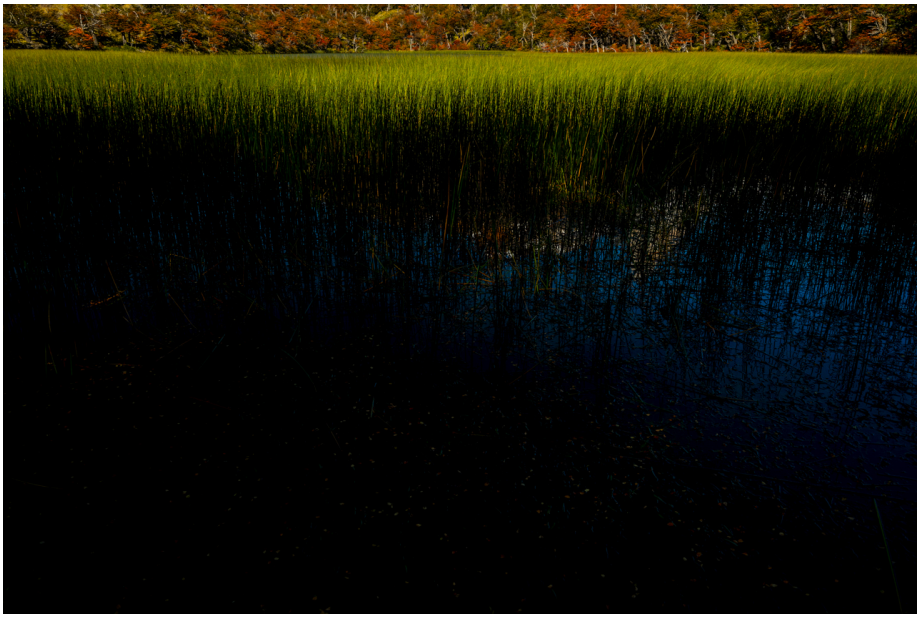
summit. On the return hike, we realized our early start was not typical for the area, since dozens of hikers were making the sojourn with an incredibly late start. For them, however, the sun would be behind the mountain and we knew that on a photo tour we had to hunt down the best light! That is, we did our best without having to bivouac somewhere in the mountains. The mid-morning images we captured were dramatic to say the least and these included a surprise session with an Austral Pygmy-owl. And of course, they're always better shots when at the end of the day you enjoy a beer while recounting a pleasant day of hiking in shorts and a t-shirt.



Lenga Forest © Steve Ogle



Austral Pygmy-owl © Alex Uram



Laguna Verde © Steve Ogle

The next morning was a sunrise session on the shrub-steppe in front of El Chaltén, or Fitzroy. A classic photo, it was important for us to tick this box, but then after a second breakfast at the hotel we continued to Estancia Huemul, an area that I hadn't explored in quite some time. Nowadays in Argentina, the foreigner entry fee is something around $50 each, anywhere, and this private reserve was no different. However, since it didn't make the tourism brochure for top ten places to hike around El Chalten, we enjoyed what could be considered a 4.5 star hike, without seeing another person. For a few hours we walked along a pleasant loop, encountering a pair of Magellanic Woodpeckers and checking out both Laguna Verde and Laguna Azul.

Torres del Paine

On our last morning in Argentina we made arrangements to take the bus to the Chilean border. This would minimize hassles with the rental car but it also gave us a chance to relax on the three-hour trip, with wifi on board and gorgeous views from the second floor of the bus. Unbelievably, we saw a puma eating a guanaco carcass at the roadside about an hour into the trip! This would be the only puma of the trip, as they have become quite difficult to see in Torres del Paine. Regardless of this, we did spend quite a bit of time searching in the usual haunts. Robert, from Punta Arenas, took us to all the known areas but the most activity we saw was the other puma guides driving around and scanning the landscape, mostly with no luck. Torres del Paine National Park has incredible scenery, including waterfalls and lakes, and wildlife. Some of the highlights included the Cuernos del Paine, guanaco, Andean Condor, American Kestrel, Lesser Rhea, Striped Woodpecker and Great Grebe. This animal is the main attraction for us on this tour. The weather had of course turned and we experienced just the right amount of rain and sun to provide excellent photo opportunities.



Andean Condor © Alex Uram



American Kestrel © Alex Uram



Striped Woodpecker © Alex Uram



Lesser Rhea © Alex Uram



Great Grebe © Alex Uram



Guanacos © Steve Ogle



Paine del Torres sunrise © Alex Uram

Sometimes the light wasn't ideal so during these moments we went hiking or checked out different zones within the park, including Lago Grey and Laguna Azul. We hiked to the summit of Cerro Condor, which rises just above our picturesque hotel. Due to the shorter days, we enjoyed quite a bit of downtime at the hotel, looking over photos or out the window at Cerro Paine Grande.

Puerto Natales

After Torres del Paine we settled in for two nights in Puerto Natales. This quaint seaside town is known by tourists as the jumping off point for the national park, and by photographers for its waterfowl and sunrises along the promenade. Although the weather was inclement, we were able to snap a few pics down there. Our full day here was spent on a boat trip to the Serrano Glacier, a couple hours up the Seno de Ultima Esperanza (Last Hope Sound) on a comfortable boat with other tourists. The weather cooperated on the short hike to the toe of the glacier and during our lunch at a farm along the fiord.



Old wharf in Puerto Natales © Alex Uram



Crested Duck © Alex Uram



Serano Glacier © Steve Ogle

Tierra del Fuego

We left Puerto Natales in a rain storm but it soon dried out as we headed south and east. We made a side-trip to an area north of Punta Arenas that provided an opportunity to photograph the Magellanic Plover, a rare shorebird of the south. Another stop near San Gregorio farm allowed some photos of the endangered Ruddy-headed Goose. After this, we arrived near the ferry crossing the Magellanic Strait, but since it was early afternoon and the tides were low, it was worth investigating some mudflats! We went to an area near Buque Quemado, our usual place for shorebirds on this side of the strait, but instead of roadside birding, we walked out into the mudflats of the bay. It was quite the hike, with some wet feet, but the reward was getting close to hundreds of Magellanic Oystercatchers, around 85 Hudsonian Godwits and quite a few lingering White-rumped Sandpipers. After this, we crossed on the ferry but unfortunately it was the boat with a disgruntled captain who doesn't allow passengers up on the deck. We'd never encountered this before and although we were disgruntled with having to stare through salt-splattered windows, it didn't seem like there was much activity on the water. Indeed, we didn't even see a South American Tern. On the other side, we settled in at our hotel in Cerro Sombrero.



Magellanic Plover © Alex Uram



Ruddy-headed Goose © Alex Uram



White-rumped Sandpiper © Steve Ogle



Hudsonian Godwit © Alex Uram

On our last day it was exciting to finally see our first penguins! This was at the King Penguin colony at Bahia Inutil, about an hour from our hotel. Due to the time of year, the area doesn't receive many visitors and there was a long-distance multi-day bike race going on right at the time we arrived. The head biologist Aurora was helping volunteer for the race so was a bit late in meeting us, but it was interesting to meet some of the riders who stopped in at the penguin colony, including the only Canadian in the race. He'd slept in a ditch the night before, which wouldn't have been pleasant, considering the sideways rain lashing the windows had kept me awake in the hotel overnight. The last leg of the journey was a 2hr

crossing of the Magellanic Straight, back to Punta Arenas. During this crossing we spotted a dolphin, many South American Terns, a dozen Black-browed Albatross and several Southern Fulmars. We also saw two groups of Magellanic Penguins. By the end, we were ready to relax at the hotel, but not before stopping at an urban wetland for one final round of photos. The next morning we proceeded north on a flight to Santiago to end the trip!



King Penguins © Alex Uram

Thank you to all that supported this memorable journey! Steve Ogle