

Q & A: Expert guide Paul Prior on the magnificence of Patagonia

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One of many trips offered by **Eagle-Eye Tours** through **Canadian Geographic Adventures**, Patagonia is a naturalist's dream with abundant wildlife, picturesque landscapes and astonishing biodiversity



Torres del Paine © Paul Prior

A landscape lover's dream, Patagonia is a **bucket list destination** that all naturalists should visit at least once in their life. And what better way to experience this region than with **Eagle-Eye Tours** and **Canadian Geographic Adventures**, where you will be joined by an expert guide and a Royal Canadian Geographical Society ambassador. Over the course of **13 unforgettable days**, you will explore areas of Southern Chile and Argentina that boast some of the world's most picturesque landscapes filled with astonishing terrestrial and marine life. Imagine being up close and personal with a southern right whale or staring out over a colony of king penguins - who wouldn't want to add these experiences to their adventurer's repertoire? Paul Prior has been leading expeditions with Eagle-Eye Tours for 20 years and says the Patagonia adventure is one that will blow your mind. When he is not guiding tours, Prior is a biologist with the Toronto Regional Conservation Authority, but loves the opportunity to show people the nature of Patagonia. Canadian Geographic spoke with Prior for an insider's look at Eagle-Eye's amazing Patagonia Wildlife Safari trip, taking place in November 2022 and 2023.

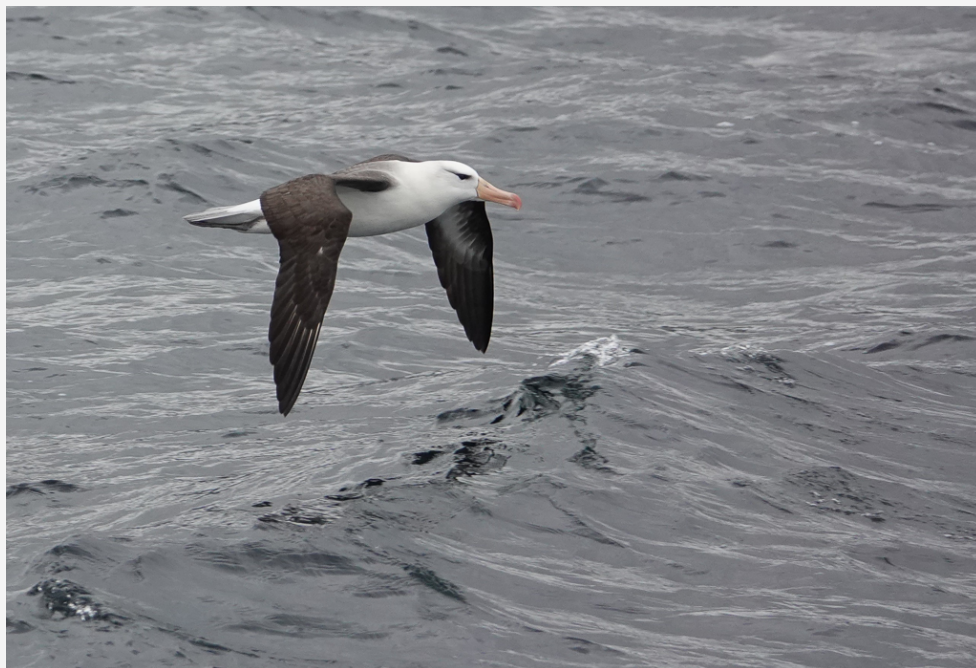


Male Puma © Paul Prior



King Penguins © Paul Prior

On the highlights of the trip The real highlight of the trip is the landscape. It's just astonishingly magnificent. Second to that would be the chance to encounter three different species of penguins on the mainland without having to go down to the Antarctic. One of the highlights of the last trip was actually getting to visit a king penguin colony. There were about 100 birds, so that was really cool. We've also managed to see mountain lions (pumas) the last couple of times and I mean, seeing a big cat is always a thrill. **On his favourite animals to see on the trip** I must admit, for me, the king penguin is the highlight. It's just special to see that. After the king penguins, black-browed albatross. Albatross are always a thrill for me. On whether you need photographic experience to make the most of your trip You don't have to be a photographer; it's not a trip that has been designed specifically with photographers in mind. You don't even need to bring a camera! I think it'd be foolish not to because you're going to miss out on capturing some really marvellous landscapes. At the same time, if you are into photography, this trip should be very high on your bucket list because there are some amazing things to see. We've had good photographers on board that have taken marvellous shots.



Black-browed Albatross © Paul Prior



Southern Sea Lions © Paul Prior

On the Eagle-Eye Tours difference We're not so geared toward seeing the highest number of species to check off people's lists. We're much more for general nature appreciation, so we try to arrange the tour in such a way that we get to see a variety of things. For example, on the Patagonia trip, we go to Pali Aike, which is pretty barren and birds are few and far between, but the landscape is just fantastic and there are guanacos all over the place and the plants are wonderful. It's a two-week trip but you could spend a lifetime in Patagonia and still be thrilled by it. So for two weeks, we try to give people a really good understanding of the region and perhaps leave them with the desire to go back and explore it in more depth. **On his favourite part of the trip** What stands out for me is hearing the reactions of some of the guests. You're on a boat, a right whale surfaces next to you and there's a big gasp and an "ah" and it just makes me smile because that's how I was the first time I saw this. And I still am to some extent.



Southern Right Whale © Paul Prior