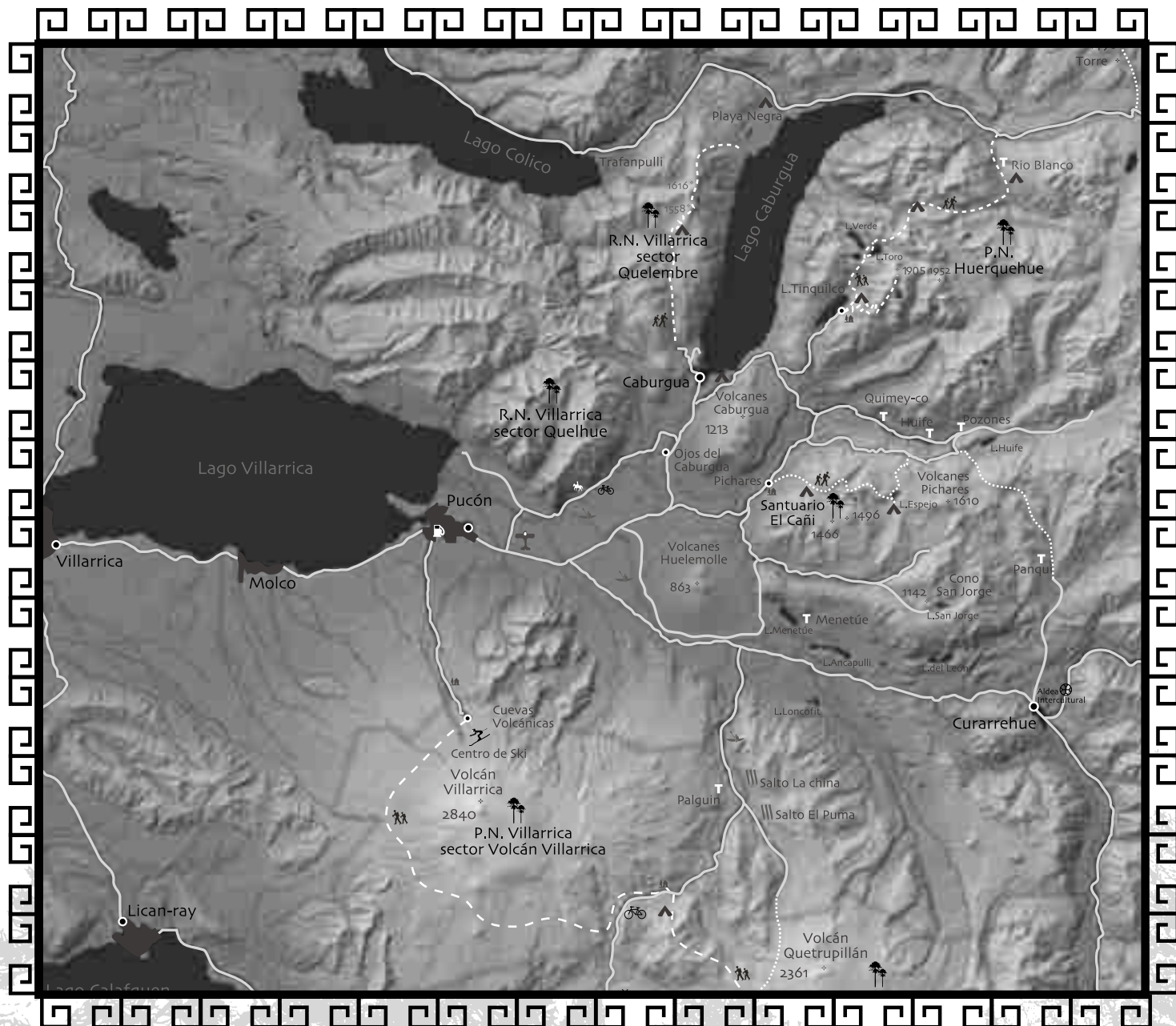






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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

A legend in his own mind, don Rick is regarded as either a spirit entrusted psychic or a spittle encrusted sidekick. Born butt first at a young age, Alerce Rick Dikulus was raised by the WigWam Indians of Minnesota. He went to Californina in the Sixties, missing the gold rush by more than a century. Lacking brains and luck he failed at everything. Then he came upon the last redwood! He traded his life for environmental work, believing that's were the money is! Spurred on by news that in Chile there grew vast uncharted stretches of cathedral trees, he walked the length of the western hemisphere, except for those countries he flew over, in search of the redwood of the Andes which, owing to a short attention span, he never found. Later, in 1973, Alerce Rick became Chile's first, and last, foreign park ranger in Galletue Park at the headwaters of the Bio Bio. Representing Ancient Forest International he seeks funding for native forest projects in Chile. His proudest accomplishment is having stayed out of the way while those with a work ethic created and managed Hostoria Ecole, conceived as an educational tool aimed at inspiring humans while guilt tripping corporations. Now a days he stays put. He is the model for Alerce Rick Adventure Where: "For those who are going where no one will see them."

ODD PARTNERS: It is hoped that this humble attempt at offering little-known outing adventures to you, our beloved !école clients, may serve to enrich your time in Chile. Over three decades we forty-odd partners, or "socios," who have created this brave, new, conservation-based experiment in tourist hosteling, have chanced upon some really stupefying options to the usual adventure travel fare: !école's Socio Paths. But hold on...

Rick's Pick's

socio paths

THE FAVORITE HIKES OF ECOLE'S SOCIOS & AMIGOS

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS:

The amigos of !école! came together in 1994 out of the effort to create Chile's first private park, the Santuario El Cañi. Twenty forest activists from Chile and twenty from North America, (representing over a dozen native forest NGO's) raised the bux to buy this relict forest out from under the nose of a timber beast. In the course of establishing the country's first native forest NGO, private park, and ancient forest education model we realized, in 1994, that we needed not only a clubhouse in which to gather every summer, but a funnel as it were. We wanted outdoor enthusiasts to visit non-profit conservation projects, such as the Cañi Araucaria Sanctuary, Sendero Pehuen, the Coastal Huilliche Trail (Mapulahual Park), the Alto Bio Bio, Pumalin Park, Cochamo Valley, and many others. So we bought the old, grubby, rundown, Hosteria Don Pepe in Pucon, shoveled out the junk, slammed on some paint, put out some carrot sticks, and changed the name. (!école, an Italian-Argentina dicho brought over los Andes in the 40's by the Pehuenche Indians, means "Eureka!" or "Save The Whales!") VOILA! In Bizzness! Ecole, in short, is something of a non-prophet hotel...weird!! So sit back, munch a beer, and go where few couch potatoes have gone before.

Flash!!! !école is now in Santiago...303 Contitucion, Bellavista, next to the zoo.

DISCLAIMER:

Don 't worry! These little hikes are (often) quite benign. We (usually) don 't send people (you) up the Devil 's Butt Creek unless they (you) deserve it. Because some of these are the best hikes ever undertaken, with the accent on "undertake," you 'd best remember: unlike the States - this is not controlled wilderness. Your feet is the exit plan. Furthermore, anyone finding the following info to be innaccurate, misleading, or full of reprehensible stretchers, deserves their money back. Likewise, if someone herein mentioned finds he-she-itself slandered, libeled, unfairly ridiculed, or prematurely dead...sue me!

RECOMMENDED BOOK: Really, "Chile Experience" (aka "Chile on an Expired Credit Card") is the best guidebook for the area covered herein - Bio Bio to Chaiten - by Josh. He 's the man for your big trips, and my words must be divided by his, multiplied by zero, swirled in the mouth, and spat out before they reach the brain.

THE HOSTERIA:

!école is often called "The Hot Springs Hotel." Although the nearest thermal baths are far away, many clients lie awake at night listening to the springs go up-and-down, up-and-down. The walls and floors are thin. One bozo tromping around in boots sounds like a Russian parade. Please remove them at ungodly hours and consider those less fortunate while thrashing or moaning. And remember our one simple policy: the first nerd up in the morning and the last bozo in at night get put to death. We're trying to sleep fergawdsake! But hey - hit the road, Jacques. May the forest bewitch you!

PUCON

Chile's favorite mountain playground, and the Mapuche's last stronghold against the Spanish in the longest war in history (350 years), Pucon means "Gateway to the Andes" in Mapudungun (and "Spoiled Rich Kid" in Spanish). Here the Pacific-sloped Andes meet the Atlantic steppes of northern Patagonia in one of the world's most exotic continental divides. Here is the heart of the planet's original and oldest forest ecosystem which Chile has, most admirably, declared a protected species. Here is the true Jurassic Park! And here the mountain-dwelling, forest-dependent, ostrich-hunting and obsidian-collecting, Patagonia-oriented Pehuenches traded with their Pacific lowland kin, the Mapuches, for salt, shells, and genetic variation. In spite of the seasonal flood of tourists this is a land of high adventure and majestic tranquility. Where to start.....

Friends Picks:

Villarica / Pucón

Not with the VOLCANO! (which would have been) **DANIELA'S PICK:** Pucón, and perhaps Chile's, most famous landmark is the Fuji-esque Volcan Rucapillan ("House of Snow") or Villarica ("Visa Gold Card"). The native people, out of respect, won't climb this sacred being. But you should.- unless you're a New Age woowoo or a Mapuche. Its awesome! History's most consistently active volcano. The Sun's original furnace, attesting still to our birth from Fire, bubbles away for your gusto.

Nor with the RIVERS! Which would have been **JOHN'S PICK.** I won't mention them. Being the whitest, wildest, and wettest in the whole wide world, info on running the Trancura, Palguin (our resident river rat Zack says Palguin's the best), Liucura, Maichin, Trufultful, (not-to-mention the Rios Petrohue, Cochamo, Manso, Futaleufu, Yelcho, Baker, etc further south) is commonplace. Were I including rivers, and were our dear !école-founding, frontier-defending, fearless river guide John Foss still alive, these adventures would have been included in great detail. No! I'll only cover what most of the books don't. What follows are our favorite, mostly unknown, adventure picks...from forty ecolé partners, covering a total of 480 years of blistering trail blazing.

Nor with Lago Mallolafquen ("Mirror Lake") or Villarica ("Chamber Pot"), whose beach is as haute'hell and pedestrian as it gets, but worth a splash...even with 40,000 people on the beach and not one bathroom (¿gee, I wonder where they all "go" ?)...**SAILING the LAKE** is founding socio **HERNAN'S PICK.** The veteran forest defender of Chile's enviro watchdog CODEFF, Hernan's been around and about the most stunning (and threatened) places on Earth. Yet, for fun, he rents a Laser sailboat, grabs the wind, and races out to catch the Volcano's late blush.

Let's start with **NICOLE'S PICK - EL CAÑI:** The Cañi is all of our favorite and is the razon d'être of Hosteria !école. Nicole is the socia who has put the most of herself into helping form Chile's premier private park. The Cañi is a classic, even unique, ancient forest of Earth's oldest tree, the araucaria. Unchanged for 250-million years this plant cohabited with the great lizards, and has had one complete twirl around our galactic ballroom. (The lizards lost that dance marathon while the archetypal Pehuen hangs in there still). This giant, relict plant, in terms of species longevity, is one of the planets most successful beings. It was designed to discourage 200 ton herbivores. Nestled within an exploded caldera is a Jurassic forest studded with a dozen lagoons. The whole enchilada is rimmed by jagged rock peaks (THE best view, short of the Volcanos, from El Mirador) and dormant cinder cones - now covered in deep forest and inhabited by puma, wildcat, rare marsupials, fox, condor, miniature (Pudu) deer, and

a bunch of birds. Your experience will not only be unforgettable (the Cani means "Vision that transforms"), but your visit will be helping to further a community-based conservation project by employing the local youth who guide and run the park. Ask at the desk for info on daily trips. Donations are welcomed.

FLACO'S PICK: !école-Lahuen official host and outdoor innovator, currently working on all-weather Cañi refugio, Rodrigo suggests this mountain **Cañi refugio**. Almost unique in Chile, this refugio will provide comfort and security when gambolling thru storm-tossed woods.

MANUEL&ROBERTO'S PICK: Cañi's veteran park guides recommend Los tres Picachos (The three peaks) just outside the Cañi sanctuary...unofficial start of **Sendero Pehuen**. Follow the ridge north to "rock central". You can go for days past three hot springs to P.N. Huerquehue.

ROD'S PICK: Chile's premier outdoor educator, and founder of El Cañi's guide training program, says a night camped up on top of the CAÑI MOONLIT MIRADOR is close to rebirth. The snow glow of Volcanos Rucapillan, Quetripillan, Lanin, Sollipulli, and Llama infuse your sueños.

The **DON ALAN:** So-named for our stalwart, idealistic, and founding socio-manager, this little walk of the TRANCURA DELTA is a half-dayer. Turn right at the lake along the curving beach to the mouth of the Rio Trancura. Alan, through !école, put lots of energy into fighting monstrous development in this seasonal wetland. (The monster is winning). The Delta is summer home to thousands of migrating birds.

An extension of the Don Alan is QUELHUE BEACH, which is **AUDREY'S PICK.** You get to this splendid, deserted beach by walking, biking or taxi across the pasarela (hanging bridge on the airport road. Turn left for four klicks). A good half day escape from civilization.

TITO'S PICK...CHILE CAMPO: You can see this pronounced valley from the front steps of !école. Look north across the Trancura at two deeply carved green, rocky valleys. The one on the right! It is accessed over the pasarela by turning left, and then right at the Escuela road a kilometer towards Quelhue beach. All the way to end! Gracious Mapuche family sells empanadas. Follow the trail up. Great forest, crashing water, and views back at Pucón from the pristine, traditional, very-much inhabited OLD Chile farm way up the valley. Try and spot metal...barbed fence, zinc roof...Nada! We're talking RUSTIC campo. There's a horse overnite option as well. Tours start from !école, with ANTILCO adventures, Matias and Karen, your hosts.

LUZ CLARA PICK's the TERMAS PANQUI. Our favorite Machi (medicine person) chooses this short hike from the Panqui hot springs, uphill for an hour to Lago Alicia, and the deep forest on the Cani Cordon. Get to this finest of all spas (which may have its own Asian ELEPHANT by the time you read this), owned by Gringo Daniel, via a lousy road. Hip hot springs. Spend a few days. Funky hotel, eight tipis with clean beds, campground. Bring a date to las Termas "Hanky" Panqui. (or...shack up with the elephant).

PASCAL'S PICK: Another version on the Panqui-Lago Alicia trip. Fearless lady explorer Pascal says start from Kira-Kira (see Winter: "Cristina") and hike along the CAÑI



Santuario El C
Visión que transforma
experimenta la sensación
de caminar por bosques

CORDON for one whole day (plan on two half days) to Lago Alicia and east, down to Termas Panqui. If you get lost, drop over to your left (lots of gravity here), west, to the Huife road, and sue me.

GABRIELA'S PICK: Our youngest lécole founder, while not much smarter than me, sometimes happens on to a good thing. In this case its the Rodolfo / Carolina HUEPIL to Lago Espejo one-or-two-day HORSE trip. This is also one of the best ways to the CAÑI CORDON and over to Kira Kira (see winter)...or north along the undulating Cordon to Termas Hanqui Panqui. You'll probably see a couple of condors. Anyway, these folks do good horsie.

PANCHO'S PICK: Our unofficial summer host Pancho recommends the two-day PARQUE HUERQUEHUE to TERMAS RIO BLANCO trek. Take bus to P.N.Huerquehue. Its a slow six hours, all the way up, thru this great lake-studded Araucaria forest park, and down to the Termas of Rio Blanco. Good open farm experience after dropping from the dark deep Park trail. Birds chirp! By the time you're ready to wring my neck you arrive. Doña Mina offers you lamb dinner and either camping or cabaña with sheets etc. The pool and tubs are included. Walk or hitch back next day. Highly recommended. Option: You can also start late. Camp at Park campground 3 or 4 hours out at trail's low point) and hit the tubs next morning, returning to campground end of day. Highly recommended.

LEZAK'S PICK: The closest hot springs to Pucón, The TERMAS LIUCURA are actually body temperature (actually, dead body - but recently dead!) and, actually, quite nice. Huge swimming pool by the crystal Rio Liucura. Food. Few people. Take bus for Lago Caburga. Get out just after bridge over the Liucura (which is just after the fork to Huife), and walk up the dirt road two kilometers or so. This is Lezak's pick...not that she's actually been there...but because she likes the name "Termas Cuerpo Muerto".

LILA'S PICK: The happiest, most enduring and capable volunteer in lécole history, Lila likes the heights. LAS PEINETAS towers can be seen from many vantage points. Its the big jagged rock like a cock's comb, close to Argentina. Take the international road to five klicks before Puesto Customs station. There's a café. Hire Lorenzo's kid to guide you. A couple hours to great rock, great views. Also, the other prominent rock in the Continental Divide area is CONDOR BLANCO or "Colmillo (Virile Member) del Diablo". It too is accessible, although the "owner" may consider it trespassing. A full day's hike. Both rocks are quite close, although they haven't spoken for years. (If you're smart you'll read Josh first.)

FLACO'S CORTES PICK: Local amigo architecto Flaco Andres says walk around VOLCAN Rucapillan (Spirit House) (or VILLARRICA (Lost Dipwad)) CIRCUIT. Two days. He says to avoid this and that and try not to get sucked into something or other. (Better read Josh.)

NOELLE'S PICK: KAWELLUCO HORSE trips... Original hostess and lécole co-founder, and now new mom says: The volcano's old entrance at "El Cerduo" across from far end of airport runway takes you up into the wildest close-to-town experience you can get. Great biking! There's a wonderful horse-around day trip into raw lava creeks, rock walls, forests, colors, lowdown snow, falling water. Also, there's an overniter to a high forest refugio. Call from lécole for arrangements.



FAT WHITE GUYS tour: The LADS (Tom Rick Jasper...Los Pendajos Canosos) from the Ecole Toby Club (no gurls) pick a gem. At the end of the Huife hotspring valley near the Regolil pass is a prominent nob. You can see it from Pucon, to the right of the Huerquehue peaks. Condors and waterfalls, alpine meadows and cold lava, Araucaria, cliffs, and commanding views...rock galore! A veritable citadel. Eleven percent of the primary forest in the 9th Region spreads out underneath. And the high meadows are full of fat little white berries that are sooo good and abundant we lived on them, if you can call that living.

ANDRES PICK: Guide-adventurero-teacher-climber-farmer, who's soon to have been everywhere, says "VOLCAN MOCHO!" The exploded little headless volcano between Lanin and Villarrica, Quetupillán, is an eight-hour walk along a great trail to the wide open crater...or to Lago Azul - which is half-way to the trail's end at Puesto on the Chile-Argentina boarder. Eternal ice, lakes and greats araucarias. Strange! Take a cab to the Palguin road turnoff and go for a half hour up to the Park's station. (Or bear left at Park sign (past the termas) to gringo Mark's comfy stead the very end of valley). Either way...Get out and walk, switchbacking uphill thru lovely Araucaria for three hours to above tree line. Best views I've ever seen. Eight volcanos: Sollipulli, Sierra Nevada, Llaima, Antuco, Rucapillan, Quetupillan, Lanin, Choshuenco.

MARK'S PICK - For gutbusting high vista day trip in Huerquehue to Cerro San Sebastian take the first trail uphill to high meadow 2hrs. rimmed by densest pure Pehuen forest you'll probably ever see. Now go for the big peak, 2hrs.. Final push thru densest purest 5ft. dwarf lenga you'll probably ever see. 10 volcanos, 8 lakes, and biggest rock in these here parts.

KATA'S PICK - MOCHO VARIATION or Villarrica Pass: Go straight on Palguin road (left at the Termas Palguin) towards COÑARIPE, past park ranger, and up to the crest to where sign says walk to glacier 1.5 k. Explore the high pass below the snow and go up to this very white field, but carefully, as there are major ice faults upon the broad great flank of this hotty. Everyone has funhere. Good camping. Great biking hiking... or go straight over the pass (NO cars!) to Conaripe, enjoy the high mountain farms, and stop at the Geometrical HOTSPRINGS.

KARL'S PICK One of the most rewarding short hikes in all of Chile has to be the Sierra Nevada hike within Conguillio National Park. The trailhead at Lake Conguillio has a sign saying "Sierra Nevada". It has spectacular views of both Villarrica and Llaima Volcanos and gently climbs to high altitude with dwarf araucaria, glacier, and waterfalls. In the autumn it is the place to be!

SOLLIPULLI VOLCANO: AGUSTO'S PICK. Sollipulli is the big exploded spread-out fandangle of a seismic blast on the north side of Lago Caburga. You drive or bus to Regolil, the Mapuche town two hours from Pucón, and continue (drive, walk, hitch) another five or ten klicks to a big wooden gate on the right with the looming volcano dead ahead (North). Once on top of Sollipulli you can be the first to cross over to the Galletue-Icalma side and the magic land known as the Alto Bio Bio. Write when you find work.

ALTO BIO BIO

As the condor flies its not far from Pucon to another world. The high headwaters of the famed Rio Bio Bio, greatest watershed on the western slope of the Andes, is an exotic dream-like setting. Here the Bio Bio, 25 million years ago, flowed East to the Atlantic Ocean until volcanic upthrust turned it North and West to the Pacific. Volcanos and Araucaria (Pehuen) forests, lakes and deep, slow fishing streams...this expansive tierra is home to one of the last forest-dependent (the piñon nut) indigenous peoples - the Pehuenche - in the temperate world. The Huemul (large deer) and Ñandu (small ostrich) are gone. But this is still one of the greatest unfenced grazing ranges anywhere. Indians on horseback. Children tending the goats. I was a CONAF park ranger here in 1973 when it was all a large park. When Pinochet gave it all to the lumber baron I fought the sell-out and eventually fled with my young daughter over the pass into Argentina...not to return for 13 years. Except for the zinc roofs, occasional hydrocarbon, and pink fishermen, this land is unchanged.

RICK'S PICK...LAGO ICALMA: Take a bus from Temuco or Cunco to Icalma. Lagos Galletue and Icalma are the twin headwaters of the Bio Bio. Icalma may be one of Chile's prettiest lakes. Abounds with shoreline camping spots. Great mountain biking, horsing, or hiking. Climb the flat-topped butte Bateamahuida and look way into Argentina. Could be the best cross-country skiing and mountain biking in South America. From Icalma walk or hitch the 20 kilometers to Lago Galletue.

JOSE'S PICK: Indigenous right's activist lawyer, and son of President Aylwin, chooses HOSTAL FOLEL PEHUENCHE in LONQUIMAY as the start or end of your High Araucania adventure. Several Pehuenche communities (mainly Icalma and Quinquen) of the Upper Bio-Bio have created a fine and comfortable hosteria in this windswept cowboy town near the Argentine boarder. Potentially best cross-country ski and mt biking in Chile. Deserves our support! Info, shelter, and comida. Phone: 045 891110.

FRAN'S PICK: For an otherworldly experience follow my favorite client into this high intermontaine basin. Head towards Cunco, Pucón, y Temuco via the prehistoric valley of CHINA MUERTA. Or, you can be the first to China Muerta via the "high" way. Climb the hill on the far side of Lago Icalma and head west along the windy volcanic ridge. Good luck. Or take the low way from Icalma by driving to Galletue Lake and turning left just before the Pehuenche village of Quinquen. China Muerta is a billion-dollar movie set. Or, skip China Muerta by driving straight, past Quinquen, and return to Temuco via the windswept cowboy town of Lonquimay. Good fishing.

NUNCA TOUR: Starting just East of Lonquimay a raw adventure awaits the intrepid. If you still operate out of your lizard brain you'll enjoy this hike, previously attempted only by giant reptiles and TOM, JASPER, and HAROLD. Get off at the smoking Lonquimay volcano. (You're on the main road between Curacautin and Lonquimay). Its last eruption, on Christmas of '89, was a great, whopping, psychedelic Roman candle. A small cone popped out on the side of the big one, spilling lava down its flanks and shooting volkwagon-sized sparks for miles. The extensive lava field is still smoking. If up tight and close is where you like it, you'll love it. Walk North from the volcano. Wear good boots and gloves. Lava's sharp. When you get to the farms, two days later, trip's over.

ANIKA'S PICK: The TORRES BLANCAS geologic curiosity area is the favored choice of our formidable, indefatigable French hiker Anika...founder of "Doigts dans le Nez Tours" (means "easy" in French). You get there by driving from Lago Icalma or from Lonquimay straight towards Argentina (heading to Pino Hachado Pass). Turn left, or north on some dirt road about halfway to nowhere (or closer) and ask everyone you see: "Donde estan las torres blancas?" (Get the gender and number right fergawdsake!) You're looking for pure white rock towers which are probably marine fossils of pure calcium or fossilized golf balls. Wierd, wild and wide continental divide. See RON'S WAY TOURS.

PUERTO MONTT

One of the questions that has never been answered by travel science is: "What's there to do in Puerto Montt?" This is the city of fish heads and rainbows, soaked despondency and soaring dreams, civilization spilling on the apron of great wilderness. None of this holistic crap for Poto Montt!

But... don't get me wrong -- I LIKE Puerto Montt! Its quite a charming place. Nothing ever changes, unless you count a few malls and highrises. For thirty years I've marveled at the winding steep streets and old rickety houses on the hill...ancient wooden German Colonial contraptions without a parallel or perpendicular line to them -- all in various stages of mossy putrifaction. Boats of all types and stripes coming and going. Here the Pan Americana stops and the Great Highway begins. It threads its way through channel and fjord, for 2000 miles, only rarely facing open sea. The deep mysterious impenetrable unknowable cold vertical jungle of the Southern Andes rims the bay to the east. More temperate rainforest wilderness exists here than anywhere south of B.C. Picturesque car-free islands with out-of-time farms are sprinkled over the blue Pacific to the west. The lovely promenade along the coast. The ubiquitous couple smooching on the bench. But what is there to do...as in "DO?"

RICHARD'S PICK -- ISLA TENGLO: For thirty years I've looked the 200 meters across the channel from the bus terminal at Pto Montt's public beach on Tenglo Island. Only last year did my old boat builder friend Richard

Alto Bio-Bio / Puerto Montt

take my hand and pop a coin into the boatman's for the two-minute junket across. Wow! One hundred and fifty houses and: NO CARS! No noise. No panhandlers. The sound of sea water lapping on sandy beach. Kids playing soccer. Take off your shoes. Walk to up high in the sky cross. Count the new technorections across the narrow channel. Have a classic Curanto feast. Hike the coast. Swim naked. If the tide comes up on a sunny afternoon the water's warm. Honest! A real sleeper, Isla Tenglo. There's alot of trash but hey - get over it by picking up some.

EL ECCCO – MARCO'S PICK: (This is an advertisement this is an advertisement this is an advert...) Turning left out of the bus terminal you walk to a playground right on the Costanera, or ocean front. Across the street is an artisan village...MELIPULLI. Great crafts, fish food, music, and the strangest business in town: a Reggae-colored veggie/pork restaurant! El Eccco. (Marco, and I are partners). Try it! Not since Ecole have you had such light and tasty fare (I hope!!). And with the best view around. See! Puerto Montt ain't so bad. If the weather's good (there's probably no word in the native dialect here for "sun") you'll want to stay a whole day. Otherwise:

ALERCE ANDINO...GALEN, KIKO, and PAUL'S PICK: Our favorite tree hugging scientist, Paul Alaback, says his favorite outing to date is the Laguna Montaña ALERCE forest an hours drive and week's hike from Poto Montt. We went there in 1988 with 44 stalwarts to do first time-ever comparative rainforest investigations. Under Paul's direction we plotted out stands in the pristine ancient forest ledges beyond Laguna Fria. One gets there by the Correntoso side of ALERCE ANDINO PARK. (NOT the Lenca entrance). Hike up to and past Lago Sargasso to Laguna Fria. Enjoy the exemplary stand just before L. Fria. This CATHEDRAL GROVE is GALEN & KIKO'S PICK. It made National Geo, shot by the late, great, dear, Galen Rowell, and guided by yours dimly. Go beyond Fria to trail's end and climb the wall (or "scale" the forest) until you bench-out in the valley of Laguna Montaña. As good as forest gets.

PABLO'S PICK: The ferry boat from Pto. Montt stops at AYACARA, on the Huequi Peninsula, once a week. Ayacara could be an island, jutting out into the sea from the wild and roadless Pumalin Park as it does. Isolated! Stranded there for rainy weeks once, an old fisherman, fed up with my whining, finally gave it to me straight: "Here, sir, it doesn't pay to have a nervous system." The Ayacara Project, headed by old friend, lécole founder, Pablo Sandor, was the original inspiration for all the private park conservation that came later. Unsurpassable but difficult alerce trekking to EL SOLEDAD. Perhaps Earth's most ancient of forests. One extensive clearcut nearby weighed-in at 1963 years per average tree. Also, Pablo has put together a most excellent conservation-based community development project that won a U.N. award.

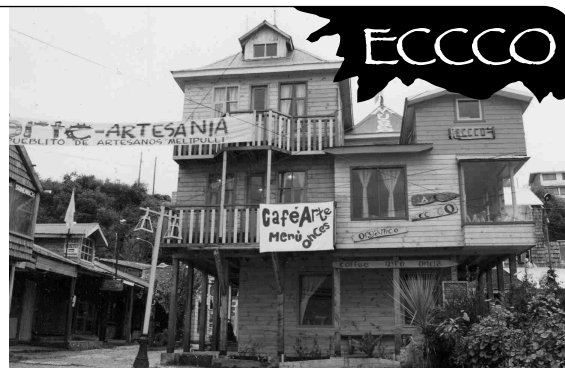
COCHAMO: (This is ELISA'S PICK)...Ron's Way's wife says take the bus A:M. or P:M. from Pto Montt or Pto Varas through the town of Cochamo to the Rio Cochamo. Get out at the bridge. Don't cross it. Hike for five hours to La Junta. Greatest vertical granite south of Yosemite. Camp. Check out the wildest waterslide ever, just upriver from where the Rio La Junta joins the Rio Cochamo. Some cross the big river here and head up the new trail to the big rock. Great alerces there. Hike upriver in la mañana for another five hours to El Arco. One of the truly ancient forests on Earth. Valley-bottom cathedral forest: the ALERCE, older than the giant sequoia, redwood of the Andes, has been waiting for 3000 years. You're late. Nevermind. Patience is a virtue. Note: give money to anyone on horseback who's Spanish is unintelligible. We're trying to show that ecotourism pays. You can do the whole loop in four days, back to Cochamo via El Rio Manso, or go over into Argentina, or retrace your steps. You can also sign up for horsetrips and comfy refugio lodging with the excellent Campo Aventura folks through their office in Puerto Varas.



TOM'S PICK: Many times have we been to EL ARCO (way up the COCHAMO valley. Beware. Even tho this is a historic route (used by Butch and Sundance) some straggler always takes a wrong turn to the right two hours above La Junta around Sixto Rojas' barn, and ends up eating his pajamas. Be careful back in there. Its a deep, muddy, and winding trail we call the "Sum Kao Dung." There's a brand new refugio, which we've had a hand in creating, which now replaces the good old funky refugio at El Arco. Camp. Anyway...many times have we wandered innocent as Eve in El Arco, a two-day hike from the road, spellbound by perhaps the most ancient of Earth's forests. Here, just to the right of the waterfall that plummets cleanly down through and under the magnificent basaltic arch, is a slight trail beguiling you up into a cathedral family. Some of them are four meters across, or 4000 years old. The ALERCE, in terms of size and age, is arguably the most successful life form in known Creation. Tom says don't wear clothes. Crawl like a primal being around the skirts, and in the laps, of these mountain beings older than the Sphinx. May the forest bewitch you!

RIO LAS PIEDRAS ("El Mallin"): Photographers **FELIPE y PINO PICK:** the first major creek heading upriver in the COCHAMO watershed: Rio Piedras (about an hour from end of the controversial logging road we've been fighting for ten years). Its the first place you take off your boots. A white boulder field. Cross the creek. Put boots on. Head uphill to the left. You'll find the old, slight trail easily, right behind the little campfire inside the wire fence. Three hours of heavy grunt gets you to an old ALERCE refugio. You are now in the alerces. If you want more, spend the night in the moldy depressing little cabin and head

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Friends Picks:

uphill into the forest next day. Go over the top and down into splendid, welcoming open meadows rimmed with pure alerce. This breathtaking sight is also **CAROLINA'S PICK** (Pumalin Park Project manager). If you still want more see "Jasper's Pick - Lost Lake" under Ron's Way Tours.

ROBO'S PICK...TRINIDAD: My cuz Rob – the robo campin mountain guidin rock doc says the three great high wild ancient white polished vertical granite massifs across from La Junta in COCHAMO contain, nestled in their laps, an exciting, hanging, hidden, ALERCE valley. Arriving in La Junta look across the river at Earth's only million-year face: granite! The far left face, the one with the giant footprint in the side, is where you're headed. Talk with the Campo Aventura folks, who have a comfy refugio on the other side of el rio, just before ascending the steep muddy new trail.

ZACK'S PICK – EL RIO MANSO: This puppy is worldclass frontier RAFTING adventure all the way. Zack's put together a gooder. The Manso is one of the last wild, major rivers in Chile. Until now, NOBODY's done it (except, of course, John Foss). The Manso valley cuts East to West across Andean Patagonia. Well-traveled ancient trails, marked by 2000+ year old pictographs line the valley, connecting the Montana-like pampa of Argentina with the fjords of coastal Chile. Butch and Sundance once traveled along this horseback highway.

DANIEL'S PICK...the UPPER RIO PUELO is a land of lakes and big, turquoise water. One of the few rivers, along with the Baker and Futaleufu, that actually originate in Argentina, The Puelo drains several million acres of wilderness. Along the river itself hundreds of colonists have pitched their fiery battles against the forested hills. Second growth forest is most all you'll likely see. But the walk is a three day meditative stroll in pastoral bliss along a wild river and hidden lakes. And just over the crests that line this great river is an extensive and unknown ancient rainforest wilderness. Founding socio Daniel Gonzalez, who perhaps more than anyone is responsible for the creation of Parque Pumalin next door, calls this one of the best hikes around...even with the new road wiping out most of the lower river's romance. You can hike it up or, starting in Argentina, down. (Same with the Cochamo).

HORNOPIREN...RICK'S PICK: Back in Puerto Montt you take Buses Fierro, A.M. or P.M., to I think my favorite place in the world. Get off at the last stop of a long ride, seaside, at the Hotel Hornopiren. Tell Doña Oli that I sent you. Watch the tide come in. Then out. A million birds. Swim. Walk the quaint coastal streets. Then, hike up into Parque Nacional Hornopiren to AFI founder and photographer **PINO'S PICK:** Lago PINTO CONCHA. The alerces, cloaked in emerald velvet for the last hour, are worth the effort. There's a little

CONAF cabin at trail's end at the utterly lonesome, breathtaking lake.

You can get onto VOLCAN YATE'S humungus glacier by following the boulder-strewn creekbed north of the cabin. This is my son **NILE'S PICK**. Top of the world vistas on an endless cracking bonewhite deep blue crevaced glacier. For those with even more daring-do there's large adventure in exploring this area, or in tripping over the east side of the Yate GLACIER and down into the Rio Puelo drainage, and back to Puerto Montt a couple days later. I tried the Puelo drop and failed, but younger, smarter ones have made it.

Or **HELLEN'S PICK:** from Hornopiren go around the left (west) side of Volcan Hornopiren to LAGO CABRERA. On the 2nd expedition we abandoned Hellen (with 7 hungry kids) for 4 days on the shores of Cabrera as we went ring counting. Due to a clerical error we took most of the food, leaving Hellen with a 60 kilo bag of sausages. She's never forgotten. This is a way better trail than Pinto Concha and a great view shot at Volcan Yate. **SARA'S PICK:** from Hellen's camp at el lago, if you want ALERCES, go left or west straight uphill on the old rocky eroded alercero trail. Stay on the ridge. Don't dip to one side or the other (as did my daughter Sara, who was literally reduced to tears fighting her way out of the kila bamboo) or you'll wind up eating your sleeping bag. If high, deep, dripping, mantled, millennial trees is your thing, this is your day. It was here, over ten years ago, that an intrepid crew of bi-national expedicionistas, scientists, and photographers first trespassed on a timber company's alerce clearcut to count rings and prove that this relict conifer is truly Earth's oldest giant. And, furthermore, that this alercal, christened SOLACE GROVE by famed photo guy DAN DANCER (his shot of Solace is in lécole...best selling rainforest poster in history) and averaging 1,963 years per tree, is the planet's oldest standing forest. At present it is being poached like mad, and is one of the focuses of the present Alerce Campaign.

PATA MAI -- **ADRIANA'S PICK:** Chile's best known forest defender and lécole socia Adriana Hoffmann is waging a current campaign to stop illegal alerce cutting. Pata Mai is a good example of how easily rainforest becomes desert. To get to this most venerable of biomes from the west, or Contao, slip past the large wooden company gate several clicks out of Contao and walk all day to the bitter end. (Or sneak over from Lago Cabrera as we did in 1989 when establishing the ALERCE as the planet's oldest giant). Worst clear cuts, best views, wildest remnant forests, dormant cinder cones...until, suddenly, you pass into rainforest! Spooky. Count the rings on any given alerce stump. One-per-half-millimeter. Coulda been greatest tourtraction in Southern Cone. Now mostly sand and shrubs and endless views until you reach Pata Mai itself.

TRACY'S PICK: CHEPU (Chiloe) lécole's professional lady forester



AKA activista swears by this puppy. Chepu is the northern section of P.N. Chiloe. From Ancud take the bus to Chepu to end, then cross river and head SW to the beach through Senora Anna's farm. Hike south along the easy beach and trails until you reach the park in a few hours. You can also rent a boatride from Chepu to the Penquin islands off the coast.

PICK: Mishka's Pick...Fin del Mundo: From Punta Arenas take the road south to the end, and then some...a great day hike to the world's southernmost continental point. Or hike a few more days and take a boatride to Cabo Froward. Prepare for All Weather!

PUMALIN PARK

Although fed up with the corporate world and dog tired of his lengthy stint at the helm of Esprit, the first billion-dollar clothes company, Doug Tompkins' twenty years before the masthead prepared him to take wilderness protection, and Parque Pumalin specifically, where no private wilderness act had gone before. A gutsy, scrappy extreme climber and kayakista, Doug pissed off everybody in a suit with his deep ecology rap, which refuses to place humans above the rest of us. The papers, thinking they had O.J. or Anna Nicole Smith on the end of their mike, turned a right-wing snipe hunt into Moby Dick. Doug talks resource management, sustainability, philanthropic responsibility, imperiled species and bankrupt paradigms. His tact for turning shallow questions into whoppers landed him in hot water (see Termas Cahuelmo) and sparked, basically, the deepest level debate to ever hit the front pages. And it's raged for years.

DOUG'S PICK...CALETA GONZALO...Wildland philanthropist Doug Tompkins spent the first part of his life accumulating a fortune (Esprit, North Face) and is now happily spending it...on pristine wilderness! He and Patagonia co-founder wife Kris McDivit have made, in the southern half of this worldclass private wilderness, a classy bunch of campgrounds...each with it's own hiking experiences. There's a great café, info, and craft building, and the cutest cabañas in the already truly cute fjords. The only roadside alerce attraction in the world awaits you at CALETA GONZALO, which is accessed by ferry once a day from Hornopiren, or from Chiloe to Chaiten where Nicolas Peña will drive you the 65 klicks to Caleta G. (See "Cahuelmo").

TAOSY'S PICK: Back in Hornopiren my daughter says hire a boat to CAHUELMO, the best hot springs you'll ever plunk yer butt in. Three or four hours and \$75 bucks later you arrive, at high tide (hopefully), to a natural human wonder. A ten thousand year-old Huilliche shell midden with seven tubs carved out of the shell rock.

The high tide comes up to the lowest tub. Cahuelmo was the flagship watershed we chose to represent the superlative nature of Chile's rainforest, and the shed we dug in to buy. It is untouched because its great tides and tidal plain scare the pants off most sea captains who don't fancy spending a month keeled over. Doug Tompkins and ecole / AFI friends made the outhouse and sign and fire pit shelter. This is deep in PUMALIN PARK, history's greatest non-governmental wilderness act. Here's where Chile's forest conservation movement started. Hundreds of folks from dozens of countries gathered at this prehistoric thermal bath every summer for three years to probe, publicize, and pray for the safekeeping of this half-million-acre fjordal mountain wilderness - emblematic of the superlative yet unknown, still-extensive Bosque Valdiviano, or "Lemu." In 1991 Doug Tompkins bought the entire 222 thousand hectares (now grown to almost 900 thousand acres). Call (065) 250079 - Pumalin HQ in Pto. Montt, for reservations if visiting Cahuelmo in February. For comfortable, great sea excursions with kayaks and mothership call Al Sur in Puerto Varas, or Carolina at the Pumalin number above.

RON'S WAY TOURS

On these outings its either Ron's way or the long way, mister. Refusing to go where any couch potato has gone before, Seven Sisters Ron, from upper B.C., came to Southern Chile in search of the unexplored. He's led us on many a wild duck hunt, for which we are, years later, sort of grateful. He's still here, too.

HUILICHE TRAIL: Seldom ever done, this prehistoric, indigenous, coastal trail winds high above the pounding sea East of Osorno and South of Valdivia. A great project headed by the Chilean Coastal Coalition, CIPMA, Defensores del Bosque, CODEFF, and WWF achieved the defeat, in 2003, of a good-ol-boy ginormous coastal logging road and development boondoggle. The strategy was, and IS still, in showing that there is income thru ecotourism for the nine Huilliche communities (ALL against the road) inhabiting this virgin wilderness...perhaps the most extensive coastal rainforest south of B.C. The wildest, most remote, and spectacular beaches in Chile. Great fishing. Birds! Sea kayak...a WWF Ecoregional priority. A strangely open understory, this ocean forest is a riot of benign species. Call or visit the Coalition office three blocks from Valdivia bus terminal on the Costanera. (063) 244590 or 257673. A description of the MAPU LAHUAL TRAIL (from Osorno south) follows:

In Maicolpue look up Carlos Paillamanque or his brothers who will guide you to Hueyelhue (the Huilliche guides are in the process of becoming certified). In Hueyelhue you can camp in the community or, at Rada Ranu - a two-kilometer beach. Good fishing. (See Jorge or Orlando Loy who are knowledgeable about the area and

Friends Picks:

trail project). From Hueyehue take guided hike to next beach south to Caleta Condor...another eye-popper of expansive white flour sand with wilderness backdrop. At Condor Ariel Millacheo is an excellent guide. He or his brothers will take you back to Bahia Mansa by boat. Trail between Hueyehue and Condor is four hours with sea views. Once again – the object is to spread money around....the aim -- to show that conservation pays. And these folks are eager to do their part.

PUEYHUE GEISERS...RON'S PICK: This is not your garden variety walk in the woods. At the north-end of Puyehue N.P. is a serious, sensuous landscape of pumice, exploding waters, hot rivers, colored mineral, steam baths, and obsidian cliffs. Take the minibus from Osorno to P.N. Puyehue. Get off three klicks before Park H.Q. (just past church on right - if you cross the river you've gone half a klick too far). Protest the six mil entrance fee to walk an hour thru private ranch. Whatever, its worth it. Its three hours uphill to the park refugio where the wonder begins. Great camping. Next morning follow the easy trail around Volcan Pueyehue, over snow fields, to "Holy Shit Corner" where the most amazing not-this-planet view smacks you upside the head. The wind-sculpted hills are impossibly carved, curved, and inviting...like a giant furniture barn sale. Two hours later you arrive at the main hotspring. (Don't be sucked in by the first lukewarm one you pass.) Here a deep cold high-Andean rivulet joins with a boiling creek. You can easily spend part of your life here. Camp. Can you spot the perfect, huge, gossamer, nipple-less breast back down the trail? I've never seen such a round hill! Explore the obsidian flows, the rock formations, the high desert streams. Hard to believe this is a temperate rainforest region. Next day walk a couple hours more to the geisers. Watch your step. Easy to get scalded.

JASPER'S PICK - LOST LAKE (COCHAMO): We lad's spent three futile years of searching in the high Alerce plateaus and benches that we call "El Mallin," above the Rio Cochamo (first read COCHAMO - Rio Piedras) Finally, in the mist of bewilderment, Ron turned the topo map rightside-up and it all became clear. Tom, Jasper, and I followed Ron straight up from the alercero refugio, down into the swamps of El Mallin - Alerce! Oolala! Then up again and down to the Lost Lake...Jasper's all-time favorite. The middle of nowhere, or just this side! Never have we seen such a spot. Warm round big blue lake ringed by Alerces, ice fields on the other side, white sand beach. Follow the little river up for 20 minutes to an anomaly...an airport-size table-flat bone-dry lichen bed. Here again - never to be believed in a temperate rainforest. You could land an airplane two ways here. This trip not for woosies! You probably won't spend the rest of your life dead, but you could end up eating the vegetarian in your group.

TORRES BLANCOS (See Alto Bio Bio - Anika's Pick): Ron's preferred hiking pard Anika Doigts Dans le Nez, transplanted from France, knows more in shorter time than any hiker hereabouts. Anika's favorite traipse is in the Alto Bio Bio, north of the pueblo of Liucura near the Argentine boarder. It is a wierd formation of white, perhaps calcified, rock towers surging up from the black volcanic cinder basin that forms the floor of this expansive intermontaine high Araucaria wonderland.

IVETTE'S PICK: The Southernmost forest on Earth at YENDEGAIA is really a cool project. Funded by a bunch of foundations and administered by Amigos de Yendegaia, this is 40,000 hectares of fjordal wilderness spanning TIERRA DEL FUEGO. The Cordillera Darwin is the greatest unexplored mountain range left on Earth. Dynamite fishing. Lots of animals and stuff. See it to believe it. Boat once a week from Punta Arenas. There's also Cabo Leon, just hours out of Pta. Arenas. It is also a non-profit private park held by the Amigos de Yendegaia Foundation. Huemules or large Andean deer here.

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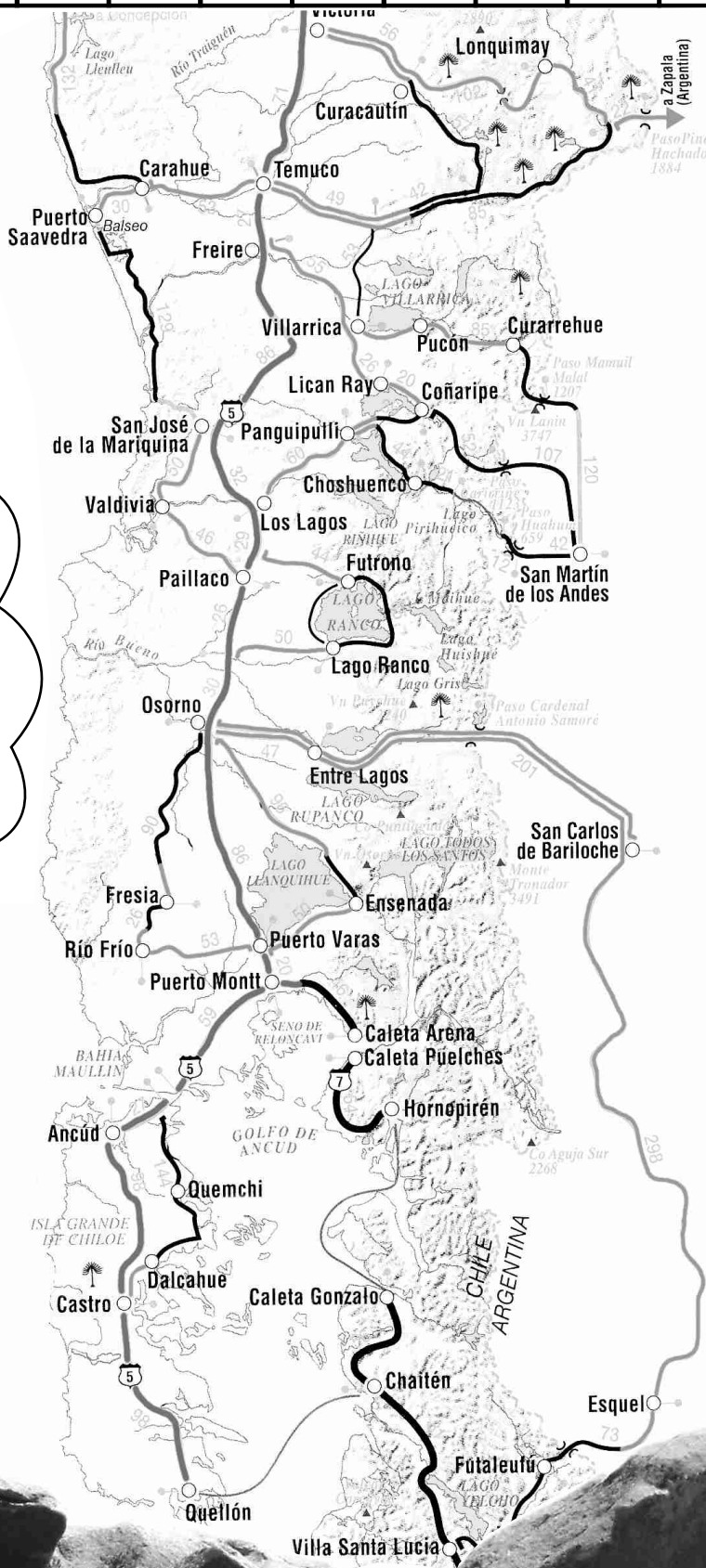


www.pumalinpark.org

ARRG!!!

WHERE THE HELL
AM I !!!
THERE WAS A TRAIL
LAST TIME WE
WERE HERE,
RIGHT? LEFT!!.....
IS ANYONE OUT
THERE?

...DAMN!!



Friends Picks:

WINTER:

ROD'S PICK: The Cañi in winter moonlight is unbeatable. Soft sensuous shooshing ski or snowshoe up through the lakes across the kila-covered white dance floor that goes on forever. Up to El Mirador. Resist temptation. You can't fly.

CRISTINA'S PICK: Likewise, winter is the favorite for our dear and indispensable Puconina !école partner. She has done more for the hosteria than two of me put together, end to end. Cristina says don't miss Kira Kira in winter. Taking taxi to COILACO ALTO just east of El Cañi, carry your skis uphill for half an hour, put em on, trip out. Big ballroom basin. All the stumps and burnt logs lie buried and one there alone in winter owns the world. Also, her hubbie, UNCLE JASPY, says snowshoe around the base of VOLCAN LANIN. Bring your passport. Another, and closer, variation is gliding around the base of Rucapillan (Villarica). Go up with the downhillers in any winter ski van, endrun the moneychangers, keep civilization in sight.

MY PICK...ICALMA-GALLETUE: Perhaps the best winter shooshing in Southern Chile, this Alto Bio Bio basin is more properly a vast rolling Patagonic landscape than a steep Pacific slope. I was the first person to cross country ski 30 years ago in this high Pehuenche homeland. I doubt if many since have done so. I'd take the bus (they have one in winter now) to Icalma from Cunco or Temuco, rent a room in the lone hospedaje there, and hope for a storm. Skiing within the Araucaria is a privilege. Drift off into the broad, lonely expanse. Don't die.

GUSTAVO'S PICK: Trip to Argentina...Agreeing with many of the other "ecole" friends' picks, socio president Gustavo y familia would just like to simply recommend a rather common, popular, but also surprising, choice among Chileans these days ("especialmente si uno ha alcanzado our very own chairman Rick's wise,calmed years..."): They're talking about soft adventure's emblematic 'field' trip to Argentinean territory, across the Mahuil Malal continental divide path...Quite a ride through beautiful forests, There are high lakes under impressive, right-at-hand Volcan Lanín where the wet Pacific slope turns of a sudden into dry, windswept Patagonia. The return journey should be through lake Pirihueico with a stop over at Huilo-Huilo falls, before going across Neltume. A long, rewarding day or week end trip, any time of the year. Helps to have a car.



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