

Date: December 12, 2003

Location: Campamento Italiano, PN Torres del Paine, Chile

Subject: Update #17 – PN Torres del Paine – Days 1 & 2

Dear Friends and Family,

I had originally planned to summarize my trip to *PN Torres del Paine* in one update but after two full days of spectacular sights, there was no way that I was going to be able to share everything at one go. So, I figured it'd be best to sum up the past two days since Update #16. =)



Before I get carried away though, I just wanted to start with my customary random picture. =)

<left> Given that I was going hiking/trekking/camping in the wilderness for 4 days and 3 nights, I figured I'd take some anti-bacterial gel with me. Several days before I even left for Machu Picchu, I sought out this stuff at the local pharmacy. What I ended up with was in the soap section...

*jabon gel para manos – no necesita agua*. Hmm, interesting, I thought, but it should be the same stuff. Turns out, it was. Or close enough, anyway. =)

Anyway, after my failed Martial Glacier excursion (see Update #16), I returned to Punta Arenas to quickly supply myself for my *PN Torres del Paine* trip and headed to Puerto Natales from where I would head into the park.

<right> My plan for trekking through *PN Torres del Paine* pretty much looked like this. It's called the "W" and I'm sure you can guess why. =) Yellow: Route taken on bus from Puerto Natales to arrive at the park.



Red: Catamaran from *Refugio Pudeto* to *Campamento Pehoe*. Orange: Day excursions carrying light daypacks (aka: CamelBak). Blue: From camp to camp carrying full

equipment (hiking pack, tent, sleeping bag, etc.) weighing between 25-30 kilos. (That's about 55-65 pounds to you. =P)



<left> There were a lot of *guanaco* wandering around on the roads as we drove in (Yellow route on map). Since it's currently spring heading into summer down here, there were a lot of little ones running around as well. =)

<right> As we approached the park, we could see the *Torres del Paine* off in the distance. The granite peaks to the right of the snow-capped mountain are the *Torres* (or Towers).



On the way up to the park, I met Elodie and Tracy who studied this past semester with COPA in Viña del Mar. I managed to convince



them to join me on my 4 day excursion through the park. =) Their original plan had called for skipping the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of my plan but would've involved a lot of time wasted being bused from place to place. My plan fit into their schedule and with our shared resources, we managed to have a great time (and not starve to death for that matter! =P).

<left> The three of us on our way across *Lago Pehoe* (Red route on map) on the catamaran to our first campsite.

<right> We arrived at the campsite at *Pehoe* and set up our tents by about 1300. After leaving most of our gear, we headed out with daypacks (well just me, they just took a water bottle.) to see *Glaciar Grey* about "3 hours" away. The interesting thing (and very annoying thing) about hiking out here is that all the maps and even signs posted showed different travel times from place to place. The times usually tended to



underestimate the actual time it would take to get from point A to point B so we allowed ourselves more time in general. =)



<left> About an hour into the hike towards *Glaciar Grey* (leftmost Orange route on map), we spotted icebergs dotting the shores of *Lago Grey*.



<right> As we continued on the trail, we caught our first glimpse of the Grey Glacier shortly before 1600. Comparing what we saw with what I remembered from photos of the place, I would say that the glacier is receding. =)



<left> It took us until 1700 to get right up close to the lookout where we could see the glacier in its entire splendor. The view was just spectacular and was definitely worth the 3.5 hour hike... and then back. =)



<right> Not only did we get to see the glacier, but we also got to see lots of big and small icebergs floating in *Lago Grey*



by the glacier. There was a nice view of this glacier and its reflection in a small inlet formed by the peninsula where the lookout was.

<left> Around 1915, as we were heading back to camp, the sun lit up the glaciers and the ice sparkled across the lake. Our first

day was incredible and we were definitely looking forward to our second day.

I woke up around 0500 the second day because the sunlight was shining into my tent. I covered my face and slept for another few hours because we were planning to leave camp at about 0830. =)

The first part of our second day involved carrying our entire packs and everything from the campsite at *Pehoe* to *Campamento Italiano* (Blue route on map between left and center Orange routes) which was marked as a “2 hour” trail.

<right> As we headed around *Cerro Paine Grande* that had been blocking our view of the eastern part of the park, we got a glimpse of the *Cuernos del Paine* (or the



Horns of Paine). You can see the giant 25-30 kilo pack sitting on my back. =)



<left> By 0940, we were by *Lago Skottsberg*, and could see the *Cuernos* in the background with bright red flowers in the foreground. The lake is about halfway from *Campamento Pehoe* to *Campamento Italiano* and visible on the map above.

After arriving at the camp by around 1110, we set up our tents and prepared

to go on our second day hike (middle Orange route on map) through the *Valle Frances*.

<right> Around 1300, after an almost entirely uphill scramble, I got a nice view down the valley towards *Lago Nordenskjold* and the camping area under the trees below.



As I was heading up the valley along the *Rio del Frances*, I got an old Vineyard song stuck in my head that I sang to myself as I continued the uphill trek.

It goes like this:

Down the mountain the river flows  
And it brings refreshing wherever it goes  
Through the valleys and over the fields  
The river is rushing and the river is here

The river of God sets our feet a-dancing  
The river of God fills our hearts with cheer  
The river of God fills our mouths with laughter  
And we rejoice for the river is here

The river of God is teeming with life  
And all who touch it can be revived  
And those who linger on this river's shore  
Will come back thirsting for more of the Lord

Up to the mountain we love to go  
To find the presence of the Lord  
Along the banks of the river we run  
We dance with laughter giving praise to the Son

- *The River is Here*, Andy Park, Vineyard ©1994

Thinking about how refreshing the river that flowed from that mountain was... it's awesome knowing that God provides sooo much more! =)



<left> The *Rio del Frances* that flowed down the mountain, through the valley, and rushing, and filled with life! =) The beauty of God's creation!



<right> A family of ducks that was swimming, eating, and playing in the river that I spotted as I hiked up to the *Campamento Britanico* that was near the end of the *Valle Frances*. I probably stopped to watch the two parent ducks and the three ducklings splash and play and dry off on the rock for at least fifteen minutes. =) Spring was definitely in the air and there were little creatures running around everywhere!  
=P



<left> On the way up the *Valle Frances*, I looked up and to my right to notice that peaks of the *Cuernos del Paine*. From this particular angle, it looked like there were little horns on the top of the peak! I thought it was interesting. =)

I continued through the different vegetation that covered the valley up to the lookout, I came across this little pond where the trees around were being reflected. I thought it was pretty cool. Can you tell where the real trees end and where the reflections begin? =)



<right> As there were also a few raindrops that started falling causing ripples across the pond which I stopped to watch for a few minutes. =)



<left> After the almost entirely uphill trek through the *Valle Frances*, I enjoyed the 360° view from the interior of the valley around the mountains all around. Additionally, the view of the peaks around the *Cuernos del Paine* was pretty

spectacular (and we thought that they were the backside of the *Torres del Paine* for most of the first day or two!)



<right> After the exhilarating run back to camp (entirely downhill), I collapsed in my tent at 1820... it took me about 3.75 hours to get up to the lookout and only about 1.5 hours to get down... All in all, the first two days have been an amazing time of enjoying the beauty of nature and I hope that you'll get to see the wonders of *PN Torres del Paine* one day. That's all for now, and I hope that my updates have been as enjoyable to read as they've been to write!

- Dan