

Date: December 17, 2003
Location: Santiago, Chile
Subject: Update #19 – Pursuit of Penguins... the Grand Finale!

Dear Friends and Family,

After two weeks of traveling throughout the region of Patagonia, I finally returned to Santiago to rest for a few days before I'll be heading back to Mexico City, Los Angeles, and eventually, Philadelphia. My study abroad experience is nearly over and I can finally say that I've done pretty much everything I wanted to do while I was here. => On the five



month anniversary of my arrival in Santiago, I was finally able to fulfill one of the few goals that I had for my study abroad experience in Chile: To see lots and lots of penguins! =D

<left> Before I get started with lots and lots of penguin photos, I thought I'd start with an image of something that I found to have been a very worthwhile investment. => While I can't exactly say how much it contributed to keeping my wallet in my

pocket and out of the hands of pickpockets, I'm pretty sure that it deterred the petty thieves who were looking for easy targets. I can thankfully say that throughout my experiences in Chile and other South American countries, I've not been mugged once even though I don't exactly blend in with the locals. => So, for any of you guys who might ever make it down here, invest in a wallet with a chain! =P

Even though I've already shared some pictures of the few penguins that I saw prior to the grand finale on December 16th, I thought I'd share a couple more. =>

<right> On King George Island, Antarctica,



this Chinstrap Penguin stood on the beach enjoying the nice weather. =>

<left> Penguins playing on an iceberg as we sailed northward towards the Drake Passage and back to South America.

<right> While I was down in the extreme south of Chile, I met Patagonia, a *pingüino magallánico* that accompanied me to *PN Torres del Paine* and back to Santiago. =P Here he is standing by the icebergs by Glacier Grey (see Update #17). =)



George Island. The waves and icy waters of Antarctica are missing on the shores of *Lago Nordenskjold*. =)

<left> Patagonia pretending to be the Chinstrap Penguin that I met on King



<right> On December 16th, Patagonia got to meet lots of his fellow *pingüinos magallánicos* on the island of *Isla Magdalena*.



<left> *Isla Magdalena* is a natural monument where approximately 60,000 breeding pairs of the *pingüino magallánico* come to nest and breed. The colony here represents about 95% of the entire population and is much more spectacular than the handful of penguins that you can

see at the penguin colony at *Seno Otway*. This is definitely a must-see for anyone traveling down here. Just make sure you're in Punta Arenas on Tuesday, Thursday or Saturday which are the only days that the ferry goes to the island which is two hours away.



<right> Another great thing about the tour

to the penguin colony at *Isla Magdalena* is that you actually get to land on the island and see the penguins up close and personal! On all the other penguin tours from La Serena, Ancud, or even in Ushuaia, you only approach the islands on a boat and take pictures from afar.

Even though it seemed that I wasn't meant to see the penguins at first, it was great to end a fantastic trip on the five month anniversary of my study abroad experience! => You may remember that I almost got to see penguins in August from La Serena (Update #4) and in November from Ancud (Update #13). Then, the *Isla Magdalena* tour got changed on December 4th so that I missed it, and my *Seno Otway* tour the same day was also cancelled. Yikes, but it's all over now and I've seen enough penguins to last me a lifetime. =P



<left> On *Isla Magdalena*, you see hundreds of penguins lounging around on the shore, swimming, waddling around, and just doing silly penguin stuff. =>

<right> Along the hillsides, the penguins stand and lie around their burrows where the baby chicks are growing up during this breeding season.



<left> You can see tons of penguins just dotting the entire landscape! All those little specks you can see are penguins. It wasn't a

colony of King or Emperor penguins in Antarctica but it was still spectacular! =>

<right> Penguin egg sitting inside a nest right by the path where tourists can visit. I figure it was going to hatch pretty soon. =>





<left> A baby penguin and its parent enjoying the fresh air and peeking out of their burrow. The babies are so cute and fuzzy! Haha. =)

<right> A fuzzy little baby penguin hiding inside the nest with its mommy



(or daddy). Adult penguins take turns watching their young and going to fetch food. =)



<left> The intrepid penguins cross the clearly marked tourist path between the shore and the hillsides where the penguins have their nests. Photo time! =P

<right> Three penguins that came up to cross the path, and decided there were too many tourists and started turning back. =)



<left> For some reason, you never really see pictures or postcards of penguins lying around on their bellies being lazy. =P

Then again, most of the pictures of penguins that people know are of the King and Emperor penguins of Antarctica with their bright orange/gold coloring on their necks, heads and beaks when there are actually 17 different species of penguins that live all over the southern hemisphere

from Antarctica to South America to South Africa to Australia and New Zealand. =)



<left> During the hour that we were on the island, I saw many penguins waddling around all over the place. I didn't notice when I took the picture but the penguin on the right seems to either have a neck problem or likes to see the world at a 90° angle. =D

<right> A pair of penguins enjoying the nice day. These penguins are monogamous and I believe they said that they keep their partners for life.



<left> Another penguin waddling around. I have lots of pictures of penguins waddling around now. =D



<right> Penguins don't just swim and waddle but they also scramble on all fours! =P



<left> Anyway, that wraps up this update and my adventures in the south! This penguin waves "good-bye!" and says "Come visit again!" =P

Hope that everyone is safely home by now for the holidays and that you'll have a wonderful Christmas! =)

- Dan