

CHILE

Quest for the Puma & Wonders of Patagonia

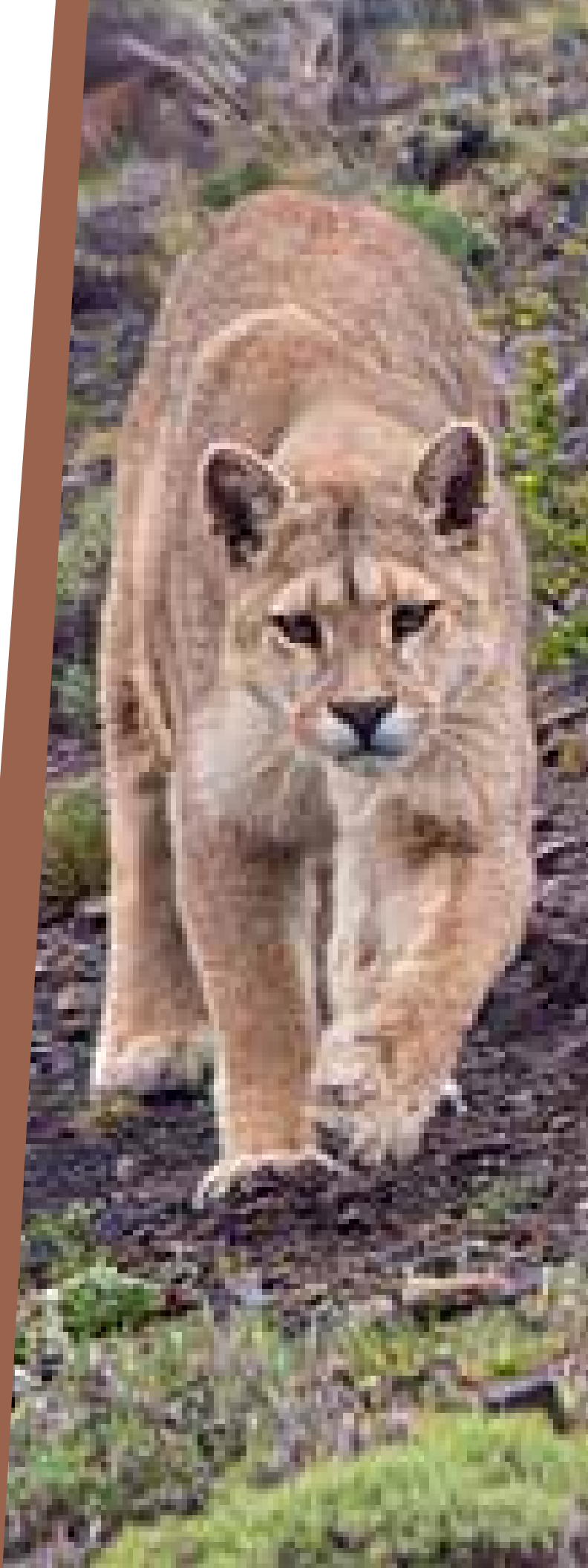
with Gustafson Photo Safari

Sept. 27 – Oct. 10, 2022

Join Gustafson Photo Safari for an exceptional photography tour in Patagonia.

Patagonia's incredible landscapes feature towering mountains, thundering glacial waterfalls, and stunning emerald lakes.

This trip visits some of the world's most picturesque natural sites including the Strait of Magellan, the Darwin Mountain Range, Torres del Paine National Park, and Punta Arenas. Under the guidance of professional photographer Todd Gustafson, you will enjoy opportunities to photograph amazing and unique wildlife such as Andean Condor, Magellan and King Penguins, South American Sea Lions, Guanaco, South Andean Deer, and the solitary yet beautiful Puma.





ITINERARY

B=Breakfast L=Lunch D=Dinner

SEPTEMBER 27 - OVERNIGHT FLIGHT
Depart for Santiago, Chile on your overnight flight.

SEPTEMBER 28 - SANTIAGO
Welcome to Chile! Our first hotel is located just steps away from baggage claim, convenient for checking in and freshening up before meeting our naturalist guide and driving towards the Andes above Santiago. The main goal of this day is to observe and photograph the impressive Andean Condor (*Vultur gryphus*), world's largest flying bird, which gracefully soars among these inspiring mountain landscapes. The Farellones area concentrates Chile's main ski resort centers and the winding roads (during the southern spring and summer) provide convenient access to fantastic locations for landscape, bird and other wildlife photography. We will explore the scenic road to Farellones and Valle Nevado that winds up the Andean foothills, located a short driving distance from Chile's capital city, Santiago. The 40-bend road slowly ascends and we will be impressed by the Mediterranean vegetation of the lower part of the road, comprising columnar cacti, tall Puya bromeliads and broad-leaf patches of woodland. Up in the quiet village of Farellones we will concentrate in finding the best spots to watch for soaring Condors, which regularly gather around the cliffs overlooking the impressive canyons. We will continue exploring the barren scree slopes, looking for a variety of typical Andean birds, including Mountain Caracara, Black-winged Ground-Dove, White-sided Hillstar, Mountain Parakeet, Rufous-banded Miner, Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant, Yellow-rumped Siskin, among many others. The road to Valle Nevado (the highest spot of our journey at nearly 3,000 m / 9,000 ft) constantly offers stop opportunities for impressive vistas of the Andes. We will also study the meadows to study the several plant species occupying these extreme habitats. From late September until February you can experience the phenomenal blooming of several mountain wildflowers. *Overnight at Holiday Inn Aeropuerto. (LD)*

SEPTEMBER 29 - PUNTA ARENA
This morning we will take a 3-hour flight down to Punta Arenas, Chile's southernmost city, located at the very tip of the South American continent on the northern shore of the Straits of Magellan. Right after meeting our

local guide, who will be with us until we fly back to Santiago, at the airport, we will be heading south along the coastal road in direction to San Juan Bay. En route we will survey some freshwater ponds where we will be rewarded by a wealth of water birds including Great and White-tufted Grebes, Crested Duck, Chiloe Wigeon, Yellow-billed Teal, Yellow-billed Pintail, Red-gartered and White-winged Coots, among several others. Cinereous Harrier, Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle and Aplomado Falcon are sometimes seen hovering in these places in search of its prey; carrion-eaters such as Chimango and Southern Caracaras will be a common sight throughout the day as well. At San Juan Bay we will explore the southern beech (*Nothofagus*) forests searching for some of its specialties including Austral Parakeet, Thorn-tailed Rayadito, White-throated Treerunner, Magellanic Tapaculo, Patagonian Sierra-Finch, Austral Blackbird and the striking Magellanic Woodpecker. From the shoreline, we will be scanning the waters of the Magellan Straits; it is very likely that we will see Black-browed Albatrosses, Southern Giant Petrels, Flightless and Flying Steamer-Ducks, Chilean Skuas, Dolphin, Kelp and Brown-hooded Gulls as well as South American Terns. Peale's Dolphins, South American Sea Lion and Southern Fur Seal are potential marine mammals to observe today. Also, there is a great chance that we will see all the southern *Chloephaga* geese species, including Upland, Kelp, Ashy-headed and the local and scarce Ruddy-headed Goose. Later, we will head back to Punta Arenas for a nice dinner and a good night's rest. *Overnight at Hotel Diego de Almagro. (BLD)*

SEPTEMBER 30 - TIERRA DEL FUEGO
Our day will start with a private transfer to the ferry docks located at the northern end of Punta Arenas. At approximately 9 am, we'll begin our 2-hour crossing through the mythic waters of the Straits of Magellan. We might see an interesting array of seabirds along with pods of Peale's Dolphin and inquisitive South American Sea Lion. As soon as we land we'll be driving for about two hours along the shores of Bahía Inútil (Useless Bay), where we expect to see a variety of wildlife including Guanaco, Southern Gray Fox, the ubiquitous Upland Goose and Chilean Flamingo. We will have the whole afternoon to visit the King Penguin colony protected by the staff of Reserva Pingüino Rey. The location of the colony is open and exposed to strong westerly winds. Please refer to our suggested packing list. We will be greeted by the reserve's warden and have a short introductory briefing about penguin facts and observation guidelines. The colony is very small comprising normally around 100+ adult individuals. There is a couple of viewing platforms located some 115-160 ft away from the penguins. We can't get any closer than that, unless the penguins decide to come closer to us, to the blinds. We suggest to bring your longest lenses, i.e. 400mm being the minimum for satisfactory shots. We will have at least three hours to look for photographic prospects. There are many interesting behaviors to document during the less busy afternoon hours. PLEASE NOTE: There are only 6

double rooms at the ranch. Priority will be given to participants willing to share at this location. We have extra accommodations confirmed at Porvenir with logistics arranged in case we need extra rooms. *Overnight at Caleta Josefina Ranch. (BLD)*

OCTOBER 1 - CERRO CASTILLO

We will have the unusual chance of visiting the penguin breeding colony again during the morning, to enjoy other light conditions (sunrise from the east). This is a great opportunity and an appealing one for serious nature photographers and people looking for more field time with the penguins. After this last visit to the colony, we will drive to Primera Angostura area to take a short ferry (about 30-min) back to the mainland. Upon arrival we will continue with our transfer to Puerto Natales. We will enjoy our picnic lunch at the picturesque coastal town of Puerto Natales, from where we will be able to observe the gorgeous vistas of the Chilean fjords with stunning Black-necked Swans feeding along the shoreline. Later we will continue our journey to Cerro Castillo, our base for the following three nights. *Overnight at Hotel El Ovejero Patagónico. (BLD)*

OCTOBER 2 - CERRO CASTILLO

These 3 days we will have a busy schedule where we will search for the Pumas of Torres del Paine. We will inspect the guanaco-rich puma hunting grounds located to the east — beyond the park limits — into the private ranch Estancia Laguna Amarga, where Pumas occupy the same habitat as in the park. The area comprised of the northern coast of Sarmiento Lake, Laguna Amarga, and Laguna Azul is well known for holding one of the world's largest concentrations of pumas in the wild. A typical day in the field starts quite early and this depends on the season of the year. We have to remember that Patagonia is a high latitude location (51°S). We will have longer daylight hours during the spring and summer and much shorter field days during autumn and winter. We will have an early breakfast and will drive right after for approximately 30 minutes, from our hotel at the village of Cerro Castillo to the puma search area at Estancia Laguna Amarga. Beforehand, our guide will have communication with the puma tracker in order to determine where individual pumas are concentrating. Our puma tracker will patrol puma corridors by car and on foot, and using this information we will plan our 1.2/2-mile hikes inside the ranch, where we will have flexibility and freedom to walk off-trail, looking for pumas. These are moderate walks, so a minimum degree of fitness is required in order to be able to keep up with the group. Topography is usually not too demanding but there might be differences in altitude of around 160-1,000ft sometimes, although our group will walk at a slow and gentle pace. Maximum elevation during this trip will be 1,000ft above sea level. Participants must be able to carry their own gear. If this is difficult for you, we ask you to coordinate this in advance with us in order to arrange some help. *Overnight at Hotel El Ovejero Patagónico. (BLD)*

OCTOBER 3 - CERRO CASTILLO

Pumas of Torres del Paine — 2nd day — Pumas are normally quite active at night, early in the mornings and late in the evenings. Our activities will gravitate around these preferred times by cats, when they are usually patrolling their territory, hunting guanacos and other prey, interacting with their offspring or commuting from their hunting grounds to their dens. We will have two sessions each day, a morning session and an evening session. During the middle of the day, we will not be watching pumas in order to avoid disturbance at a critical time, when they are resting, sleeping after a long night hunting elusive guanaco. Normally and depending on the light and condition of the day, we can continue photographing other wildlife in the park or provide our guests with some time to rest, charge batteries and get ready for the evening puma session. Estancia Laguna Amarga's model is very good in preventing overlapping among different groups of puma enthusiasts as they limit the number of visitors on a daily basis. We will investigate our own designated areas of the ranch (which will shift every day) and concentrate on individual pumas. We will have packed lunches, snacks and drinks for our field days. Later in the evening, we will have dinner back at our hotel or sometimes inside the park, depending on the daylight hours and the season. *Overnight at Hotel El Ovejero Patagónico. (BLD)*

OCTOBER 4 - CERRO CASTILLO

Pumas of Torres del Paine — 3rd day — To see a female puma and its cubs against this magnificent mountain backdrop and big sky is one of the most magnificent wildlife spectacles in this part of the world. In company of our guide and puma tracker, we will follow pumas at a prudent distance with the

help of binoculars and spotting scopes. The approach distance varies but there is a 50-meter (164ft) rule. Sometimes pumas are inquisitive and indulging, being very habituated to the human presence. Those will be our stars but we must respect their space; we must be prepared in advance and bring your longest lenses (400mm +) in order to take advantage of our photographic opportunities. Bringing a tripod or monopod is always recommended; a light-weight carbon-fiber version is always the best option. *Overnight at Hotel El Ovejero Patagónico. (BLD)*

OCTOBER 5 - TORRES DEL PAINE NATIONAL PARK

We will have an early start in order to be at location to photograph the Paine Massif at dawn. Today we will explore the southern and western regions of this huge national park, which comprises an extent of 600,000 acres. The omnipresent Paine Massif, a magnificent set of rugged peaks, formed out of granite and sedimentary rock, dominates the landscape. The long-gone Indians of Patagonia called it Paine, meaning Blue, presumably referring to its remarkable coloration when observed at a distance. We will have the opportunity to explore the Nothofagus Southern Beech forests and its diversity of plants and animals; we may find Magellanic Woodpecker, Austral Parakeet and, if we are lucky, the shy Andean Deer or Huemul. We will be marveled by seeing the contrasting mosaic of towering mountains, glaciers, wetlands, steppes and forests. Lake Grey is certainly one of the highlights of the day. Colossal icebergs are stranded on the southern shore of the lake after a long and slow transit from the glacier front. From this shore we will board our boat (the M/V Grey II) for a 3-hour excursion through the icy waters of the lake towards the actively calving front of the Grey Glacier. Grey is one of the nearly 50 outlet glaciers originated in the massive Southern Patagonian Ice Field, world's third largest ice cap after Antarctica and Greenland, and is one of the most beautiful and colorful in Patagonia. The glacier is flanked towards the east by impressive granite walls that are part of the Paine Massif, and towards the west by the eroded and low summits of the older Andes. We will be treated with a glass of Pisco sour or Scotch with millenary ice. This evening we will have an optional photo outing for sunset and the dramatic cloud formations. *Overnight at Hotel Lago Gray. (BLD)*

OCTOBER 6 - TORRES DEL PAINE NATIONAL PARK

This morning we will have again an early start in order to be ready to photograph the Towers or the Horns with the first light. With the right lighting, the mountain base turns to orange colors and the scene becomes very dramatic with peculiar lenticular clouds moving fast over the peaks. At the eastern corner of Sarmiento Lake, we will reach a location that commands the most incredible views of the towering peaks of Las Torres, the pinnacles from which the park takes its name. As we move around the park, we will observe confiding herds of Guanaco, a southern relative to camels, the curious-looking Lesser Rhea and impressive Andean Condors soaring along the road. During the morning we will visit the eastern side of the park to enjoy the views of one of the impressive waterfalls of Paine River and if it's clear, of the fabulous granite columns of the Paine massif from Laguna



Amarga. We will keep exploring the alkaline ponds and reed-fringed lagoons located of the eastern part of the park. There are approximately 120 species of birds in the park and we will see a considerable number of them, some with the help of binoculars and the spotting scope. The flora is also a very interesting subject for observation and photography. The park holds probably nearly 500 species of plants; the southern spring and early summer (mid-October through late January) are great to see the myriad of flowers that bloom in these magnificent landscapes. After our return to the hotel and enjoy our delicious dinner, we will have another chance to photograph the mountains and clouds at sunset. *Overnights at Hotel Lago Gray. (BLD)*

OCTOBER 7 - PUNTA ARENAS

We will leave Torres del Paine National Park, hopefully with many rewarding memories of our explorations and wildlife encounters on this beautiful corner of Patagonia. On our way back to Punta Arenas, we will visit the Patagonian ranch Olga Teresa, which is probably one of the most accessible locations in the world to see and photograph the world's heaviest flying creature: the majestic Andean Condor. Reachable by car in approximately 60 minutes from Punta Arenas, the ranch protects, researches, and showcases a population of 100+ Andean Condors that soar, socialize, and sleep at a 20-meter-tall, vertical rock face that itself is embedded in a steep, 200-meter-high (700-foot-high) hill. In the Patagonian Andes, Condors are a common sight but the conditions at Ranch Olga Teresa are usually extraordinary. We will look for them in the field, watch them flying or resting on the cliffs, with the help of binoculars and spotting scopes. The photographic opportunities are usually great but you will need a suitable long lens (400mm or larger) for better results. *Overnight at Hotel Diego de Almagro. (BLD)*

OCTOBER 8 - SANTIAGO

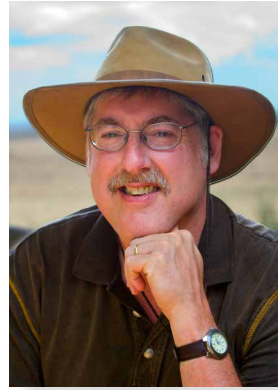
This morning we will have an early departure (6:45 am) to sail out bound for Magdalena Island, in the waters of the mythical Straits of Magellan, in Patagonia. This protected area holds a huge Magellanic Penguin colony of more than 150,000 individuals. Besides the penguins, several other species of seabirds such as Imperial and Rock Cormorants, Dolphin and Kelp Gulls, Chilean Skua and South American Tern nest here. At approximately 8:30 am, we will be reaching Magdalena Island and its imposing cliffs, teeming with wildlife. We will have one hour to explore the trail towards the center of the island, which ends at the conspicuous lighthouse which is now the ranger station. We will be overwhelmed by the large numbers of penguins inhabiting every available spot of the island's surface and by their raucous braying calls. Some of the penguins will be busy while landing, coming ashore from their feeding trips, taking a bath or preening and resting peacefully at the shoreline while others will be waking with its characteristic gait towards their brothers to incubate the eggs or attend their chicks. South American Sea Lions occasionally patrol the coast looking opportunities to catch a distracted penguin. After this amazing adventure, we will be transferred to Punta Arenas airport to fly back to Santiago. *Overnight at Holiday Inn Aeropuerto. (BLD)*

NOVEMBER 9 - SANTIAGO/DEPARTURE

This morning we will head towards the Pacific Coast to Cachagua to visit a protected breeding colony of the endangered Humboldt Penguin. The endemic Seaside Cinclodes and the Marine Otters are both possible here as well. Before heading back to our hotel, we will stop in a coastal marsh to see a variety of waterfowl including Red Shoveler, Yellow-billed Pintail, Speckled Teal and Chiloe Wigeon, all three lowland coot species (Red-gartered, White-winged and Red-fronted), Spot-flanked Gallinule and Plumbeous Rail, which is surprisingly quite easy to spot as it often walks in the open. We will return to our hotel and have some time at our day room to get ready for our international flight back home. *Day room at Holiday Inn Aeropuerto. (BL)*

NOVEMBER 10 - ARRIVE HOME

ABOUT YOUR LEADER



Todd Gustafson is a professional nature photographer and founder of Gustafson Photo Safari. Todd grew up in Tanzania and has won numerous photography awards. His work has been featured in many international publications and museum exhibits, including a display in a permanent exhibit in the Smithsonian Institution Museum of Natural History, publications by the United Nations, and product guides for NIKON Corporation, where he works as a clinician/teacher. Todd is also a highly accomplished trumpet player and has degrees in music education and trumpet performance.

THE FINE PRINT

Price includes accommodations, meals, activities and excursions mentioned in the itinerary, entrance fees, private vehicle transportation, internal flights, bottled water during the program, English-speaking guide throughout the program.

Price does not include international airfare, visa fees, any beverages throughout the trip (except for bottled water), meals not mentioned in the itinerary, and any personal extras such as phone calls, minibar, and laundry.

A \$4,000 per person non-refundable deposit is necessary to confirm a booking. Final payments are due no later than 90 days prior to departure. Cancellations received less than 90 days prior to departure are not refundable.

Holbrook Travel strongly recommends the purchase of travel insurance for medical emergencies while traveling and to protect your investment. Please note the purchase of Cancel for Any Reason Coverage or to exclude pre-existing conditions with Trip Cancellation coverage may require policy purchase within 10-14 days of your initial deposit, depending upon the provider.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Todd Gustafson | gustaphoto@aol.com | gustafsonphotosafari.net

Pelin Karaca | pepin@holbrooktravel.com | holbrooktravel.com

