



PATAGONIA ECOSYSTEMS: THE CHILE PROJECT

January 11 - February 24, 2017

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Meeting Place: Puerto Montt, Chile

15 quarter credits/10 semester credits

FULL PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Thank you for your interest in our Chile program. In this program, team members will take part in unique firsthand investigations of southern Chile's diverse wildland ecosystems and the wildlife species they support. We will gain personal familiarity with the ecological diversity of Patagonia, from the rainforests of the Pacific coast, to the ice-capped Andes, to the steppes in the rain shadow of the cordillera. We will examine the fascinating natural history and biogeography of this region, where some species remain little-changed since the breakup of Gondwana 200 million years ago. Together we will explore National Parks, privately-owned protected areas, and unprotected places to study the ecology, conservation, and management of ecosystems and threatened wildlife populations.

The vast landscape of fjords, glaciers and mountains of southern Chile was one of the last places in the world to be explored and remains one of the most pristine on earth. Thus, Chile is the perfect setting to immerse ourselves in relatively intact wilderness while learning about the challenges of conservation in a developing nation with often dichotomous development and preservation goals. Through extensive backcountry wildlife and wildlands field studies, we will examine the intertwined economic, ecological, cultural, and management dimensions of environmental problems and conservation strategies in Patagonia today.

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I. Background Information

Together we will travel to national and private parks throughout southern Chile to learn about the natural history, ecology, conservation, and management of wild lands and wildlife. This program seeks to provide team members with a firsthand introduction to several of Chile's diverse ecosystems (interior volcanoes, mountainous coastal temperate rainforests, islands, fjords, rivers and lakes, and marine systems) and the diversity of bird, mammal, fish, and plant species they harbor. Our group will learn about ecological research and conservation from local scientists and conservationists, through readings, discussions, and by conducting field research projects of our own. Our ecological studies and plant surveys will coincide with cultural

interactions where we will see firsthand how various land use practices and policies have shaped the landscape. Our stays in rural communities in Chile will enable us to experience traditional lifestyles that are quickly fading in the face of globalization, and provide insight as to how community-based conservation strategies might be applied.

II. Project Goals and Activities

The program will begin in Puerto Varas, Chile, near Puerto Montt, in the scenic Lakes District in south-central Chile. After making sure we are all well equipped, we will travel by bus to the Grand Isle of Chiloé where orientation and the first segment of the program will take place. We will spend the first few days at the Senda Darwin Biological Station, a site of ongoing important research in the region. We will both begin and end the course at the Senda Darwin, spending our initial introduction to Chile learning about key organisms and understanding how they might be studied, and our the last few days of the program learning about a long-term on-going research project. Upon arrival in Chile, expect a full immersion into learning about the flora and fauna, their ecological roles, how to identify various species and how they might be used for both commercial purposes as well as traditional and medicinal practices. We will also begin with a course in basic Spanish language (for those who need it), and an orientation to the culture, history, ecology, and biogeography of Chile. We will then embark on a multi-day backcountry field study of the coasts and rainforests in Chiloé National Park. In the National Park, we will examine the impacts of deforestation and fragmentation to Chiloé's rainforests, as well as study the role of indigenous peoples in conservation, management, and tourism in this region.

For our next field experience we will travel by ferry back to the mainland for an extended stay in Parque Pumalín, where we will embark on field studies of fjords, coastal mountains, verdant rainforests, volcanoes, and glaciers – namely, all of the things Chilean Patagonia represents. In Pumalín, we will investigate pressing issues surrounding this large, privately owned nature reserve. We will initially spend time in the southern part of the park near the community of Chaitén. We will have the opportunity to study firsthand the ecological and social changes following volcanic eruption and see how both natural and human communities rebuild. In Pumalín we will build upon our knowledge of the diversity of species present in Chile's temperate Valdivian and Northern Patagonian rainforests. We will not only learn about the ecology of this wild and remote area, we will also participate in unique conservation programs that may include forest restoration, sustainable community and farming projects. Our exploration of the Pumalín area will end in the small community of Hornopirén after which we will return to Puerto Varas to resupply.

Next we will explore and hike into an unprotected yet pristine river valley in the Puerto Montt area to conduct our field studies. This river valley, similar to some of the rivers further south in Chile, is threatened by the country's ever increasing need for electricity and the energy potential present in the pristine, flowing water. The area also contains remnant, ancient alerce (*Fitzroya cupressoides*) forests. We will learn about the natural history of this area, the conservation challenges faced in the valley as development pressures increase, and the campaign started by the local community to preserve it. After another quick resupply in Puerto Varas, we will return finally to the Senda Darwin on Chiloé, where we will hear final project presentations, take the final exam, learn about the area's long-term ecological research project, review and assess various conservation initiatives/techniques seen throughout the course, and celebrate successful completion of our program. Much of our time will be spent in Chile's spectacular backcountry. Typically, we will backpack to remote base camps from which we will conduct our field studies. **Please note that prior field research experience is not required. All necessary skills of data acquisition will be taught on-site in Patagonia.** Our field studies will take place in the winter, Chile's summer, and will take advantage of the excellent weather at this time of year in the warmer latitudes.

III. Academic Credit

Students will receive 15 quarter credits/10 semester credits from Western Washington University. Our staff will be happy to explain the program in further detail to the applicant's advisor, if necessary. This field studies program gives credit in three courses:

ESCI 497T, Environmental Wildlands Studies (5 quarter credits/3.35 semester credits)

ESCI 497U, Environmental Field Survey (5 quarter credits/3.35 semester credits)

ESCI 497V, Wildlands Environment and Culture (5 quarter credits/3.35 semester credits)

Letter grades are based upon: 1) active participation in our learning process and activities; 2) examinations; and 3) implementation and presentation of two independent research projects.

Team members are expected to conduct themselves in a mature and responsible manner. Wildlands Studies reserves the right to require any student to withdraw from the program if their conduct is detrimental to or incompatible with the interests, safety, or welfare of any course participants. We ask all students to read the Student Program Manual before joining the project on-site.

IV. Team Logistics

Participants will fly into and depart from Puerto Montt, Chile. Participants can decide whether to fly home on the scheduled date or remain in Chile to travel on your own.

All reasonable efforts will be made to follow the activities outlined above. However, please understand that on our Chile Patagonia program, travel arrangements can remain tentative until the traveling actually takes place. Weather conditions, road closures, volcanic activity, as well as political and bureaucratic considerations may affect our plans. Wildlands Studies has put together an innovative, unique program in Patagonia; and team members need to be flexible, patient, and prepared to adapt to unexpected situations.

V. Accommodations

Primarily camping, backpacking, occasional youth hostel or rural lodge.

VI. Official Documents/Visa

You will need a current passport that does not expire until six months after the end of the program. U.S. citizens are no longer required to pay the Entry Reciprocity Fee upon arrival at the Santiago Airport. If you are not a U.S. citizen, you will need to verify if you are or are not required to pay this Reciprocity Fee prior to entering Chile.

VII. Language

This program is taught in English, although many of the research stations and locations we visit will speak Spanish. The ability to speak Spanish is not a course prerequisite. The Instructor and other staff will translate as needed. Of course, it is always helpful to speak Spanish, and if you have the chance, please practice or brush up on your Spanish-speaking skills before the project initiates.

VIII. Pre-Program Mailings

Detailed information regarding travel/flight and visa information, equipment/gear requirements, food costs, meeting plans, group expenses payment, medical and vaccination recommendations, and academic preparations will be sent to all team members in a logistics letter emailed about 8-10 weeks before the project initiates.

IX. Project Leader

DANIEL J. HAGAMAN: M.S. in Environment and Resources, University of Wisconsin, 2006. Daniel is an anthropologist and naturalist with over fifteen years of experience working on conservation and environmental education projects in diverse international and US locations. His research interests lie in ornithology and sustainable resource management of protected areas and wilderness. Daniel has conducted research on the *Polylepis* forests of the Andes mountains and worked on conservation and education projects in Bolivia. Daniel has been teaching with Wildlands Studies since 2009 and has taught in Chile, Bolivia, Argentina, New Zealand and Alaska. He currently leads our Chile Project.

X. Project Costs

Program Fee: Winter 2017: \$4000 plus \$150 Application Fee. Program fee due November 1, 2016.

Winter 2018: \$4150 plus \$150 Application Fee. Program fee due November 1, 2017.

Enrollment on a space-available basis after the fee due date until the program is full.

Estimated In-Country Group Fee: Winter 2017: \$2650 per person.

Winter 2018: \$2750 per person.

This covers most in-country accommodations, travel in-country, camping costs/permits, logistical support, group supplies and materials/research costs.

Food Money: \$600-700 (this will vary according to individual taste)

Personal Spending Money: \$300 (this varies - but don't be caught short)

Estimated Airfare: \$1600

Students should inquire at the financial aid office of their home campus regarding the use of their loans or grants for this program. Wildlands Studies is not responsible for non-refundable airline or other tickets or payments or any similar penalties that may be incurred as a result of any course cancellation or changes.

XI. Contact Information

Email: wildlands@wildlandsstudies.com

Phone: 831-684-9999

Fax: 831-684-9998