

Day 40 – Mirador Cuerno, Patagonia [Wednesday 02-Mar-2011]

My back was sore from the hike yesterday so sleeping on hard ground only worked while I was dead tired. We'd heard no rain over night. The sun was rising as we got up to prepare breakfast. There was frost on the ground. We left our campsite at 9AM and headed for Salto Grande.



Sunrise over the mountain at our campground in Las Torres



Along the way to Salto Grande we stopped at Lagunas Mellizas



A long way from home: this truck camper had plates from Washington State

The weather looked much better than yesterday. We drove out to Salto Grande and entered the Mirador Cuernos trail that leads off from the parking lot. We saw a truck camper at the parking lot with US plates. Once we entered the trail, we were along. The trail is quite easy and it takes about one hour each way. A few giant Condors circled above as we started walking.



A few Condors were passing by overhead as we entered the trail



Along the trail



This Patagonian trail is leading to a great vista by Mirrador Cuerno

At the end of the trail is a park bench facing the mountains and Lago Nordenskjold. We were alone out there and sat for about 25 minutes, just enjoying the quiet. As we got ready to head back, we bumped into three hikers heading to the bench. After that, we ran into 70+ people along the trail! We were really lucky to have the bench to ourselves.



The thorn bushes along the trail are so dense that our heavy back pack could sit on them

We ate a snack at the car before we hit the road again. We decided to take the south road out of the park via Serrano.



Looking back over Lago Pehoe and the mountains in Torres del Paine



Along the way, south of Lago Pehoe, in Torres del Paine National Park, Patagonia

The gravel roads are brutal out here. Its full of very serious wash boards and pot holes. There are times when you have to stay below 20 mph to keep your teeth in place. There are no radio stations at all out here so there is no way to overpower the road rumble.



Leaving the park via the Serrano exit we could see the mountains behind us



Approaching Puerto Natales: the road is quite nice once you're off the gravel

It was so sweet to hit a regular paved road again. Everything went quiet. We quickly drove through Puerto Natales but decided to not stop and instead continued towards Punta Arenas.



Several Cisne de cuello negro (black necked swans) could be seen by Puerto Natales



Along the shore by Puerto Natales, Patagonia



On our way back to Punta Arenas we also saw several large Nandu (Rhea) birds again

The Nandu birds are hard to spot because they look like sheep from a distance, although they only have two legs. They are definitely much bigger than sheep. Their backs are 4ft above the ground and their heads are 5 ½ ft up.



We also spotted large groups of pink flamingos (Parina grande)

When we got back to Punta Arenas we stopped by the grocery store to pick up a few items. We then went back to our guest house. The tent had dried nicely in the car. We met a Japanese couple at the guest house who were on their way home to Japan after staying four years in the US. They were both doctors.

Lois offered some BBQ'd lamb to go with our sandwiches. It tasted really great. Like in New Zealand, even though there are plenty of sheep out there, it's almost like buying contra-band if you try to get the meat locally. I enjoyed an evening discussion with Lois.