

Day 41 – Pale Aike National Park, Patagonia [Thursday 03-Mar-2011]

We got up fairly early, but I decided it was time for me to catch up on our diary. We ate breakfast and I then worked on it for a few hours while Lilli read. After completing three more days, we decided we wanted to do something with the day besides hanging out at the guest house. It was, after all, relatively good weather outside, and we still had the rental car.

Just after 1PM we decided to make a dash for Parque Nacional Pale Aike, which lies about 200Km from Punta Arenas, by the border with Argentina. We drove through some rather barren landscapes. We stopped at a famous abandoned farm (the first Chilean farm in this part of the country) and took some pictures.



Barren and dry landscape in southern Patagonia near Terra del Fuego



Stopped along the highway towards Terra del Fuego in Patagonia, Chile



An old barge from the late 1800s lies on the beach in Southern Patagonia

The last part of the drive to the park goes through some rough gravel roads in areas that appear to be used by a gas extraction company. We could see wells in many places. Once we got inside the park, the quality of the gravel roads improved and was almost flat. The park is at the border with Argentina.

We parked the car at a trail head. This can best be described as a smaller version of Craters of the Moon National Park in Idaho. It has the same lava field, but it is a bit older. The field in Idaho was active as recent as 2,000 years ago while this field was estimated to be about 10-12,000 years old. It was windy.



The lava field in Pale Aike, Chile, reminded me of Craters of the Moon, Idaho



In one place the trail took us into a collapsed lava tube and crater

After walking around for almost three hours we started our ride back home. On our way back out towards the main road we saw a sign for land mines. I recall that our hosts have told us that the Chileans put that along the southern border with Argentina during some conflict in the 1970s. And, the location of the landmines is no longer certain.



The southern border between Chile and Argentina is littered with landmines.



When we got back, La Casa Escondido had prepared a wonderful BBQ dinner for us