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1. Patagonia Hiking Season Is Approaching!

As the northern hemisphere prepares for winter, the stunning Patagonia region of Chile and Argentina is getting ready for a summer of hiking in some of the most dramatic national parks on the planet. Windswept plains, jagged granite peaks, dense forests, Andean wildlife and advancing glaciers give Patagonia intriguing variety. Southwind's [Hiking the Patagonian Andes](#) program is a 15-day active adventure featuring day hikes (all below 5,000') through alpine landscapes and along the shores of turquoise lakes. After an invigorating day we return to cozy lodges and estancias like Hostería Las Torres (pictured), where you can sit by a crackling fire with a glass of wine to share photos and stories.



Our Jan 31-Feb 14 small group departure is open with space available!

Travel Fact: Patagonia was originally inhabited by the Tehuelche native people, who averaged almost 6 feet in height compared to only 5 feet for 16th century Spaniards. Early European explorers believed it to be a "land of giants."



Chile's Colchagua Wine Region, A Great Extension To Any Patagonia Trip



Our Director of Operations, Luis Felipa, recently visited Chile's famous Colchagua valley, and reported back on some of the area's finest wineries. Just a 2-hour drive south of Santiago, Colchagua has gained recognition as one of the finest wine regions in the world, with over 400 years of viticulture experience passed down through the generations. The combination of winds funneling up the valley from the Pacific, cool summer nights, and irrigation from the Tinguiririca River flowing down from the Andes gives the grapes a distinct flavor and acidity. Tradition and quality earned the valley the honor

of Best Winemaking Region in 2005 by Wine Enthusiast.

As a specialist in custom adventures, Southwind can create an excursion to this magnificent valley that is tailored to not only your style of travel, but your palate as well. There is a wide variety of experiences in the valley, from the colonial mansion of Hacienda Los Lingues to the more modern and eco-friendly reds of Montes. Casa Silva is an intimate boutique hotel and restaurant with only seven bedrooms, while Hotel Santa Cruz features amenities such as a spa, private museum and an exclusive casino. You can go horseback riding with the Equestrian Club at Viu Manent, or even experience making your own wine at the distinguished MontGras winery. Our favorite, though, is the upscale Bisquertt family winery, where 4 generations of family members have been directly involved in making some of the country's finest wines.

Travel Fact: Chile is the only wine producing country in the world that avoided the Phylloxera pest that devastated vineyards in the 19th century. As a result, some vines have been producing the same distinguished grapes for over 100 years.



Behind-The-Scenes Access To Peruvian Artist Carlos Chaquira

Peru is recognized worldwide for its history of skilled artisans creating traditional handicrafts unique to the region. There are a wide variety of shops in Lima and Cusco specializing in ceramics, jewelry and weavings. Southwind offers a number of customized tours that allow travelers to meet the artists, learn about its history, and watch as they work on their creations.

As one of the most influential jewelry makers in Cusco, Carlos Chaquira was inspired by his Incan and Moche ancestors to create intricate sculptures, necklaces, bracelets, earrings and pendants. He works primarily with traditional materials like lapis lazuli, copper, silver, gold, crisocola (Andean turquoise), and most notably spondylus, a colorful spiny tropical shell once cherished more than gold. Enjoy 2-3 hours of closed-door access to new abstract pieces with Carlos and his wife, Natalia, as they explain the origins of their artwork. The visit even includes a small silver souvenir designed by Carlos. It is a great addition to any of our Peru trips that include Cusco, such as [World of the Incas](#) or the [Urubamba Weaver's Trek](#).



Travel Fact: The spondylus shells were used as currency not only in the Pre-Columbian Andes, but over 5,000 years ago in Europe as well. Thriving in the warm waters off Ecuador and Peru, skilled divers would plunge 160-200 feet in the ocean to harvest the precious mollusks, which were also prized for their use in fertility rituals.



New Extension To Peru's Caral Ruins



In 2001 researchers stunned the archaeological community by carbon-dating the remote ruins at Caral back to 2627 BC. This changed history by proving that a complex urban society existed in the Americas around the same time as the ancient civilizations in Mesopotamia and Egypt. The site features a variety of housing for different social classes, from spacious homes for wealthy families built beside an important pyramid, to apartment-like buildings for workers. It is also notable that there

were no war items or weapons found on the site, indicating that they were peaceful people, concentrating on fishing, farming and trading.

Southwind offers a one-day extension to these impressive ruins. On the way to Caral we visit Bandurria, a site overlooking the Pacific Ocean that was also constructed around the same time. Once we reach our destination we step back in time to an early civilization, touring the complex that UNESCO has declared a World Heritage Site. On the way back to Lima we stop at Albufera del Medio Mundo beach to stretch our legs and breath the invigorating sea air. This extension can be added to any of our [Peru adventures](#), as they all start in Lima.

Travel Fact: The ruins at Caral are a 163-acre complex, whose largest social class was focused on agricultural production. Farmers used early irrigation canals to grow crops such as pumpkins, squash, sweet potatoes, corn and cotton with water from the Supe River.



Condé Nast Traveler Recognizes Our Own Tom Damon



For the fifth year in a row, Southwind's President and lead Adventure Travel Specialist, Tom Damon, has been named to Condé Nast Traveler's annual list of the World's Top Travel Specialists. To be included on the list, "they need to offer a combination of insider advice, local

connections, added value, and special access," said Condé Nast Traveler Consumer News Editor Wendy Perrin. The annual list began as a service travel directory 10 years ago, yet it has turned into a must-have resource of the most impressive, knowledgeable, and experienced travel specialists in the world. If you would like to have Tom set up your next adventure in South America, please contact him at tom@southwindadventures.com.



Ways to Save!

Southwind offers travelers a number of ways to save on our adventures, including discounts for Early Signup, Groups and Children.

Also inquire about Galápagos cruise specials.

Please visit our [Travel Discounts](#) page for further details.

What's a Chaski?

"Chaski" refers to the messengers of the Inca who would run along the kingdom's vast network of trails delivering vital information. News, intricate communication, quipus - knotted strings conveying regional statistics or perhaps exotic foods were relayed between

Chaskis as they made their way towards the Incan capital of Cusco.

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