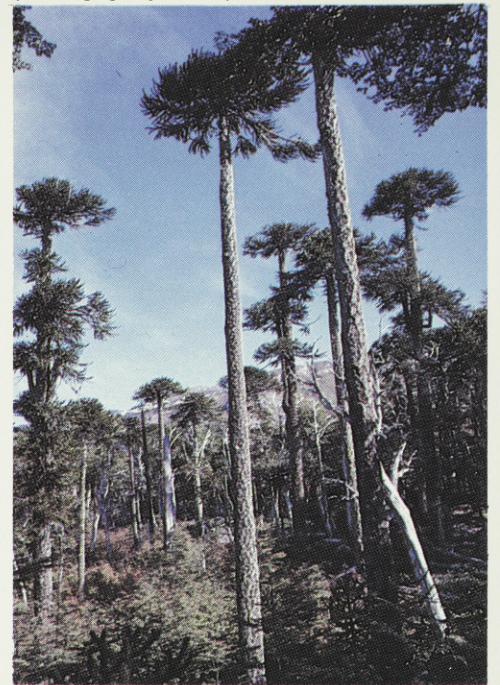




The colourful mistletoe (*Tristerix aphylla*), parasitising the cactus (*Trichocereus chilensis*) in Parque Nacional La Campana. Interior of subalpine monkey puzzle — beech forest at about 1,200m, some 100m below a treeline depressed by vulcanism on the slopes of Volcan Villarrica in Parque Nacional Villarrica. Here a sparse open canopy of monkey puzzle (*Araucaria araucaria*) emerges above a dense cover of small deciduous beech (*Nothofagus pumilio*).



biological features, particularly some of the curious woody members of the rain and cloud forests.

In the *Araucaria* (monkey puzzle) forest zone that intervenes for some 300km between the dry shrubland of the north and the Valdivian temperate beech — *Araucaria* temperate rain forest zone to the south there are nine national parks (see Map) that preserve a range of natural features but particularly thermal springs, active volcanoes and the *Araucaria* forest itself. The only park visited in this region, the 654,375ha Parque Nacional Villarrica, contains impressive examples of these features. The frequently active Volcan Villarrica (2,840m), with its extensive stands of mixed beech — *Araucaria* forest on the upper flanks, is within easy walking distance from the congenial thermal resort hotel of Termas de Palguin, located near the road end at 680m on the volcano's eastern slope and conveniently reached by colectivo (taxi) from the delightful resort town of Pucon some 30km away.

The region of active vulcanism extends some distance southwards of the *Araucaria* forest zone into the zone of Valdivian beech forest that is characterised by the presence of bamboo (*Chusquea* spp.) in the understorey. The usually dense layer of bamboo often retards or delays regeneration of the beech species in these forests. One of the volcanoes, Volcan Osorno (2,660m) on the western margin of the extensive Parque Nacional Puyehue (134,125ha), is of particular interest as its most recent eruption was recorded by Charles Darwin who witnessed it from the "Beagle" when it was anchored in the harbour of Puerto Montt 60km away, in 1843. A rough gravel road gives easy access from the village of Ensenada on the shore of Lago Languihue through the zones of beech forest (that contains many



An impressive notice at one of the entrances to Parque Nacional Villarrica through a grove of pure *Nothofagus pumilio* forest, one of the deciduous beeches. The national parks of Chile are run by CONAF, the national forestry organisation.

View of the 654,375ha Parque Nacional Villarrica from near the resort town of Pucon at about 39° 20'S with the frequently active Volcan Villarrica (2,840m) rising above the mixed beech forests, mostly of the deciduous species *N. pumilio* on the lower slopes. One of the evergreen beeches (*N. betuloides*), frames the view.

