

genera shared with New Zealand) — *Weinmannia*, *Luzuriaga*, *Pernettya*, *Hierochloe*, *Gunnera*), mixed scrub and scoria to permanent snow. The 1843 larva flow with its developing vegetation remains an obvious feature of the mountain.

The efficient, regular and economical surface public transport terminates at the southern end of the Pan American highway at Puerto Montt but a partly completed road southwards from here was recently extended through the impressive mountainous region to link nearby Chaiten with Coihaique some 300km further south and now provides public access through the transition to the true Chilean beech forests that lack bamboo and so are much more strongly reminiscent of those in New Zealand, as in the vicinity of Parque Nacional Lago Rossetot. From Coihaique, capital of Chile's XI Region, there is a long established road access 65km to the coast at Puerto Aisen and on to the port of Chacabuco through some of the impressive canyons of Parque Nacional Rio Simpson (41,160ha). Here large areas are still recovering from widespread fires lit to clear land in the 1930's — the landscape in places here is strongly reminiscent of South Westland. At the nearby sea terminal of Puerto Chacabuco there is a small national park the 221ha Parque Nacional Puerto Chacabuco, of mostly beech forest that rises from part of the harbour shore.

One of the largest and best known national parks in Chile is Parque Nacional Laguna San Rafael (1,350,123ha) at 47°S, notable for its massive tidewater glacier but accessible only via expensive luxury cruisers from Puerto Montt or by a chartered float-plane. Chile's largest national park, Parque Nacional Bernardo O'Higgins (1,761,000ha), named after the famous Irish liberator, occupies one of the most impressive mountainous sections of the generally inaccessible southern Andes and contains the famous peaks of Monte Fitzroy (3,375m) and Cerro Pyramide (3,382m). This park is contiguous to the south with one of Chile's newest and most interesting national parks, Parque Nacional



The upper slopes of Volcan Osorno (2,660m) in the 134,125ha Parque Nacional Puyehue from a site at 750m in the larva flow recorded by Charles Darwin in 1843 when he was anchored in Puerto Montt some 60km distant. The large coarse herb (*Gunnera chilensis*) is prominent among the sparse scrub of *Embrotium* (Chilean fire bush) *Berberis* and beech (*Nothofagus pumilio*) that has colonised the site.

Torres del Paine (162,000ha) that was created in 1975 by the disestablishment of a large estancia or grazing run in order to preserve both a series of impressive granite spires or tors, the Paine Towers (that unfortunately were concealed in cloud during a one-day visit to the park) but also a viable herd of the declining southern camelid, the Guanaco. Being located in the rain shadow of the main Andean chain, this relatively dry region contains some typical

Aerial view south westward over large (800,000 ha) Parque Nacional Alberto m. de Argostini and the ice fields of the Darwin Cordillera with its several tidewater glaciers along the southern coast of Chile at about 55°S latitude. Seen en route from Punta Arenas on the Magellan Strait to Puerto William on the Beagle Channel. The reddish rock in the foreground appears to be an outcrop of ultramafic rock or serpentine.



A herd of the small southern camelid, the Guanaco, in the tussock grassland — shrubland (*Festuca* — *Baccharis* — *Mulinum*) of Parque Nacional Torres del Paine (162,000 ha) which was established in 1975 from an estancia (or grazing run) as a refuge for this previously declining indigenous species.

Typical river flat beech forest of the evergreen *Nothofagus betuloides*, near Parque Nacional Lago Rossetot at about 44°S latitude on the newly completed road between Coihaique and Chaiten. The general view reminds one of the lower Hollyford Valley in Fiordland National Park.