South America 24: Day 29

Description

South America 24: Day 22

Go to South America 24 ; Day 1

Go to South America 24 : Day 37

Mirloâ??s hostel in Futaleufu is nice, great kitchen and very comfortable bed. And I slept through the snoring, yay! A good nightâ??s sleep makes all the difference!

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Day 29: Puyuhuapi

I joined up with Felipe and Jorge and we ride together to a place along the Carretera Austral, Puyuhuapi. Itâ??s a small town at the northern end of a fjord, ie. at sea level. The first 50 or so kms were on a dirt road but a much better one than the two Iâ??ve seen so far. Iâ??m kind of getting the hang of riding on these with the feeling of floating, and when the speed is 70 to 80 the bike skims over and loses the reverberations that are very bad when you go slower. Motorcycling is all about confidence and overcoming your fears.



Narrow bridge with nice scenery.





After 50 kms of dirtroad we turned south on Chile 7, which is the Carretera Austral. This road was ordered to be built by Pinochet in 1976 and is 1270 kms long starting in Puerto Montt and ends in Villa Oâ??Higgins. Most of the northern part is tarmac while further south it is mainly gravel road which I got to experience the next few days. But todayâ??s ride on the Carretera Austral was all on paved surface

so we could keep a good speed. We arrived in Puyuhuapi early afternoon and discovered itâ??s located at the end of a fjord. I decided to try camping for a night and we found a campsite with a roof cover.





After unpacking and setting up the tents we went for a walk in the neighbourhood and we bought beer and was consuming it while sitting on a park bench. After a while the town police car stopped and the policeman came out and said that open consumption of alcohol was not permitted. We sheepishly walked back to the campsite where we could down the remaining beer.

Felipe and Jorge cooked a vary nice dinner which we ate with a bottle of nice wine.




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Tried to get some sleep but people were talking loudly and laughing at 11.30pm, I got a bit upset so I got up and gave the loud people a talking to ð??? Next morning I see a sign where it says quiet from midnight so I felt bad about it. Oh well. Anyway, sleeping in a tent does not seem to be for me, I could not sleep at all! Iâ??m too used to a comfortable bed.

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Day 30: Coyhaique



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After some discussion over lunch we set off after 1pm, going south on Ruta 7 with the plan to go to Coyhaique. For a long time it was a miserable day with rain and wet roads. There was a long stretch of dirt road and a particularly challenging part was going up a steep hill with numerous very sharp switchbacks of treacherous gravel. At one 180 degree turn my rear wheel slid quite a bit, I was alright but my heart skipped a beat! After that the road was tarmacâ??ed the whole way and the rain gradually stopped.





We stopped at a few vantage points but with fog and low hanging clouds there was not much to see.

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After crossing a bridge Felipe stopped and pointing back to a sign for a waterfall and we made U-turns going back to look at the beautiful cascaded waterfall. Very nice!

After arriving at Don Titoâ??s guest house and getting installed, we met up at a nearby beer place before going to eat at a very busy restaurant. I ordered something I didnâ??t understand what it was and it turned out to be raw beef on toast, it was actually very nice but I was afraid that Iâ??d have stomach problems the next day

Day 31: Puerto Rio Tranquilo

I split up from Felipe and Jorge who had plans to do hiking for a few days and decided to carry on south after a very lazy morning. I slept really well at the Don Tito bed an breakfast and was in no rush to get going.



After packing everything, I went to get Sleipner who was parked at an awkward place, where the host wanted me to park to make room for the cars of more guests. Well, it didnâ??t go so well and I ended up dropping the bike in an enclosed space against the house making it very difficut to get a good grip to raise it. I asked the host for help but we couldnâ??t right it. He had to call a friend who came around and helped to get Sleipner rightside up. No big deal, nothing broken on either bike nor meâ?¦ I thanked them both deeply for being so kind.

After all this I didnâ??t get going until noon and set off south on the caretera Austral. The first 100 kms were easy along a nice tarmacâ??ed surface but then the gravel road took over. The first bit was surface prepared to lay tarmac on which, as I said before, isnâ??t easy to ride on. At one stretch a road planing machine had created a ridge of 30 cm of gravel and I chose to ride on the unplaned side but after a while there was no more road left and I was stuck on the side of the high ridge but couldnâ??t get through. Fortunately, a car driver saw my trouble, stopped the car and came out to give me a push to get through the ridge. Phew! If not I would have been stuck! What a nice guy! Two guys giving me much needed help in one day! Amazing! From then on it was all gravel road and pretty slow going. However, rewardingly, the landscape was fantastic with amazing views.



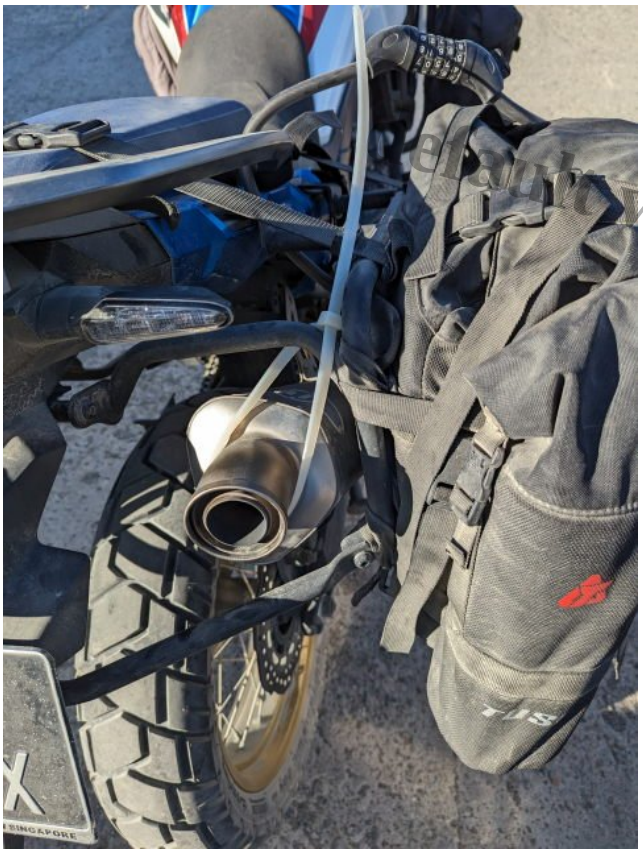

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After 150 kms of gravel road the time was approaching 5 pm and I was ready to stop for the day. Fortunately, I came to a small, but touristy town, with a hotel and they had a room. The name of the village had a poetic ring to it â?? Puerto Rio Tranquiloâ?¦

Day 32: Bajo Caracoles



I got up pretty early and did some work on the bike, some screws for the windscreen were coming loose and a bolt holding up the exhaust canister had come off so I used a temporary fix to hold it up. Not so pretty but itâ??ll do!

After breakfast I managed to get going at 9 am. I knew the road to the border with Argentina was not going to be fast or easy being gravel the whole way. Some stretches were easy and some pretty technical. The rutts are always bad when going uphill and there were a lot of those, the rutts are so bad that the traction control (before I knew how to set it properly) would kick in and almost make the bike stop and making it necessary to change down a gear. There were road works in stretches making the surface very difficult to maneuver â?? but I got through. The reward for my struggles was the amazing views. After 4 hours I reached Chile Chico, right on the border with Argentina. 160 kms of

gravel road in 4 hours gives an average speed of 40 kph, good or bad? Who knows and who cares?

After a quick lunch I crossed the border and found very good roads and did 200 kms before stopping at Bajo Caracoles. I used to use Booking.com to reserve a room but havenâ??t done that the last week. I found that booking.comâ??s price is higher than what I can get on the spot and also I donâ??t know beforehand the road conditions and whence not how far I can go in a day.





Scenic views from todayâ??s ride

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Very basic hotel in Bajo Caracoles

The hotel in Bajo Caracoles was very basic and pretty expensive for what it was. They can charge that much because there is nothing else for hundreds of kms. I rode 200 kms from the first town in Argentina, Perito Moreno, and there was no human settlements anywhere to be seen.

Day 33: Gobernador Gregores

This place, with the rather strange name, is around 250 kms from Bajo Caracoles along Ruta 40. Asphalt the whole way apart from some short stretches of dirt. I stopped to get some fuel and coffee and happily set off to go as far as I could towards El Chalten. Unfortunately, I didnâ??t take a turn where I should have and rode a long way before I saw my mistake. I decided to go back and hit very strong head winds making the return trip very arduous.

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Back in Gobernador Gregores, I found a hotel and, later, had a nice meal. After a good nightâ??s sleep I decided to take a rest day, update my blog and watch the F1 race â?? if possible. After many days of riding I need to get my clothes washed and after walking along the street looking for a laundry place I reach the petrol station and I ask the lady at the counter where I can get my clothes washed, she says she can do it! Amazing! I can pick them up after 8pm.

Day 35: El Chalten

Woke up pretty early to start the trip to El Chalten. I knew there was a bad stretch of road that could take a long time to navigate. After 65 kms of tarmac I entered this infamous section od Ruta 40, named â??Maldite 73â?• (Damn 73 in English) in the iOverland app, feeling pretty confident it wouldnâ??t be much of a problem. It started pretty well but after some kms I entered a section with deep gravel, the bike started drifting, I couldnâ??t straighten it up and down I went. Observing the bike on the road I found no damage on either the bike or myself. There is no way I can lift the bike up myself so I had to wait for help to arrive. This is a very desolate stretch of road and I had to wait 10 or 20 minutes before a couple of cars arrived and several guys came out and helped me righten the stricken â??whaleâ?•. After that I hopped straight on the bike and got going. However, confidence always takes a hit when I crash and with that I tense up and also loose the feeling of the bike so I started very slowly. Suffice it to say, the rest of the stretch, some 70 kms, was a nightmare ð??•



Beached Hinda

The day before I met some bikers at Gobernador Gregores and they were going to ride 300 kms and one day extra to avoid the bad stretch, at the time I couldnâ??t understand why, but now I certainly could. After close to 4 hours I got through the bad section and could run at normal speed until reaching El Chalten.



I quickly found a hostel, and at first, balked at the price it was charging, 3 times as much as the room in Gobernador Gregores for a worse room, but had no choice but to accept. Itâ??s still about the same price I would pay for any hotelroom in Sweden so really no big deal. El Chalten is a resort town and they can charge a lot and people will still come.



Start of the trail

After a really good nightâ??s sleep I decided to stay another day and go hiking to a lake with good views of Fitzroy. After a few kms of the hike there was a viewpoint and I sat down on a bench and asked the woman sitting there where she was from. Singapore she answered! With that we started talking and her husband turned out to have been a professor at NTU (university in Singapore), who had just retired, I told him my wife received her PhD from there. He immediately was interested to know which subject she had chosen and it turned out not to be his, anyway, it was a really nice conversation and we wished each other luck for the hike.

At another rest stop I ran into a group and they asked where I was from and I said Sweden. A woman then said that the football team Boca Juniors had chosen their colors based on the Swedish flag ones. OK, strangeâ?¦ I then ran into a group of four americans and when I was told they were from Minnesota I said that people there were mainly from the noâ??rdic countries, I walked with them for a while until we came to a spot with amazing clear views of Fitzroy and we helped each other with photos. After some more steps I could hear the beautiful language of Swedish being spoken and, of course, I started chatting to the couple discussing which route they should choose. They were taking buses between various places and were full of praise for Argentina.

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Once reaching the lake which was the goal of the hike, I got some very nice pictures of the famous â??Wâ?•, Mt Fitzroy, mountain, before starting the hike back.


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In the far distance I could make out a glacier that was spilling out into a steep gorge.



Later I ran into a couple where the man was carrying their 8 month old baby sitting in a back pack, I saw the baby was wearing ear-studs and asked if they had made holes for them. I was surprised to hear they made the holes while she was only 3 days old, apparently a common custom in Argentina!



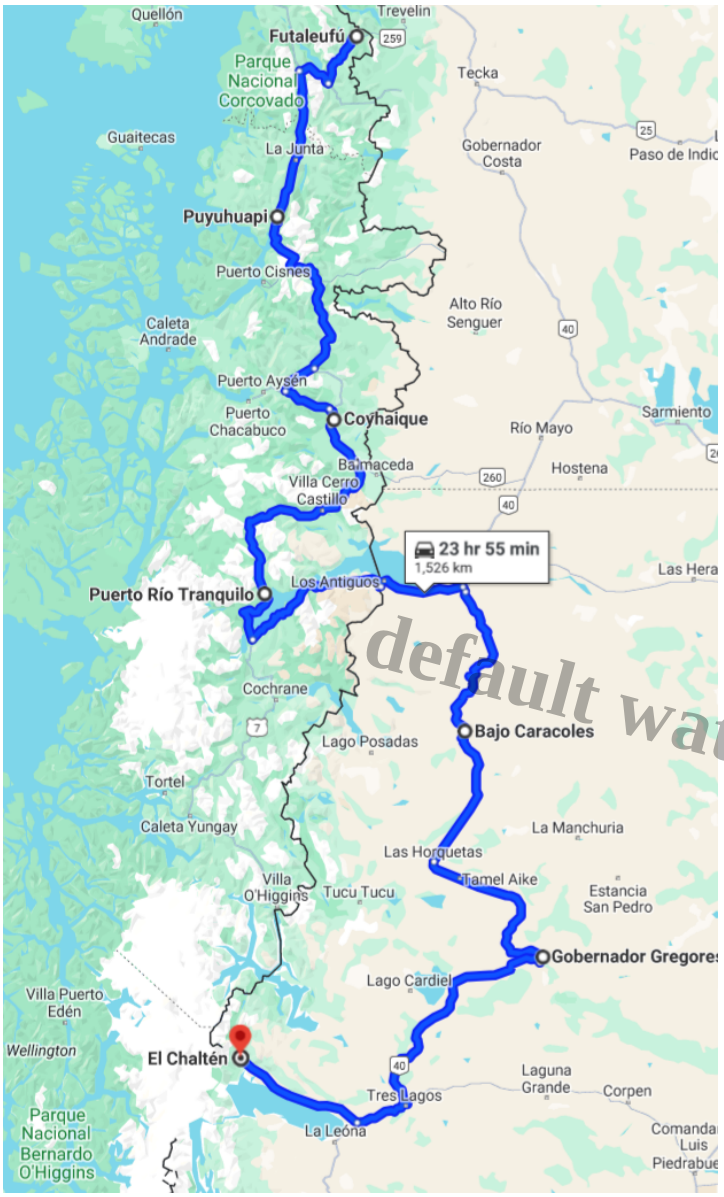
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After 13 kms I was back down and on the way to the hostel found a bar serving beer.

It couldnâ??t have tasted better, fantastic!

I was surprised at in how good a shape I was in, and felt really good when passing people less than half my age ð??? I must have recovered from the Covid infection!

This was a fantastic day with gorgeous weather and a really nice hike â?? what a difference from the previous day!



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Progress from Futaleufu to El Chalten. 1526 km in a week.

Category

1. Argentina
2. Chile
3. Honda Africa Twin
4. Motorcycle travel

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admin