

# Midlife Madness in SOUTH AMERICA



26 days - March 2017



## IMAGINE ENJOYING A LUXURY CRUISE THROUGH Chile's Spectacular Fjords



**C**HILE, IN CASE YOU'VE NEVER BEEN THERE, IS A long, spindly country, jammed between the Andes and the Pacific and stretching down the lower left-hand-side of South America. Much of Chile's endless coastline is a clutter of spectacular fjords and rocky islands, spreading southwards like a giant's jigsaw puzzle – and the only way to explore this tangle of canals, sounds and straits is by boat.

So, once we'd shaken off jetlag in Santiago (Chile's capital), we hitched a ride to nearby Valparaiso and sneaked aboard a Very Nice Cruise Ship.

It's all a bit of a blur now, but life quickly fell into a happy rhythm – cruising by night, sightseeing by day, and going ashore at achingly beautiful Chilean *puertos* (ports-of-call): Puerto Montt, Puerto Varas, Puerto Chacabuco – all watched over by the looming Andes.

At some point we found ourselves cruising the narrow, rock-studded Strait of Magellan – a famous 560km passage from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean that's anything-but straight. (It's a foggy, twisty-turny, easy-to-get-lost-in labyrinth.)

On arrival at the one-time garrison town of Punta Arenas (*poon-ta uh-RAY-nus*), we hopped into a small bus and shook-rattled-and-rolled past vast sheep farms (spotting an occasional *gaucho*, cowboy, on his horse) to a lip-smacking lamb barbeque. Then we shook-rattled-and-rolled some more to a windswept bay where we bade a cheerful "*Hola!*" (hello) to our first penguins: plump, well-fed Magellans, who seemed pleased to see us.

Then, a couple of mornings later, we woke to teetering cliffs, crunching frozen rivers, and bobbing icebergs – so shockingly close we could almost touch them! We were in Chile's famous Glacier Alley ... and I soon lost count of the glaciers, spilling over from the massive ice-sheet that lay hidden above us in the clouds, and emptying out into the freezing green waters below.

We docked early afternoon at the Argentinian frontier-town of Ushuaia (the closest most wannabe explorers get to Antarctica), and piled onto the top deck of a catamaran for another eyeful of Tierra del Fuego's wilderness and wildlife: this time it was sea-lions, cormorants and seals, kicking up a royal stink as they sunbathed on wet rocks ...

(from the Cooneys' Travel Diary)

# Midlife Madness Cruises & Tours

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