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South America (Patagonia [Argentina and Chile])

The Nature Conservancy

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SOUTH AMERICA (PATAGONIA [ARGENTINA & CHILE])

Stretching from the foothills of the Andes in Chile to the Atlantic coast of Argentina, the Patagonian grasslands are a reminder of untamed wilderness and wide-open plains. The region is home to the legendary gauchos, Argentine cowboys known for their skill with horses and their penchant for mate, a brew of stimulating South American herbs served in hollowed-out gourds.

Across an expanse of 240 million acres, the region boasts a wealth of natural resources. Despite being arid and semi-arid, these temperate grasslands support many plant and animal species. Plant species have evolved to withstand droughts and fierce, unrelenting winds that sweep down from the Andean peaks. The tough tussock grasses and low shrubs of the Patagonian steppe sustain a variety of animals, including the endangered guanaco, the puma, the gray fox, and several species of armadillo. Birdlife is rich and varied, including the iconic Andean condor, a wide array of raptors, burrowing parrots, and the ostrich-like rhea. They are also crucial for conserving healthy soils, controlling erosion, cycling nutrients, and maintaining clean water sources, all very important for human well-being.

These grasslands are threatened by unsustainable grazing practices, increasing subdivision of the land, development of energy resources, and a lack of standardized regulations for managing fresh water resources. Conservationists are working with partners throughout the region to protect and restore Patagonia's grasslands.

Courtesy of The Nature Conservancy

OPPOSITE PAGE: ANTOLOGIA
Ingrid Roddick