

# Cultural Tourism In Fragile Institutional Contexts

## Project For Cultural Routes In Tierra Del Fuego

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### **Abstract**

■ The following paper presents a project of Cultural Routes designed for the Chilean Tierra del Fuego, linked to promoting tourism and boosting the economy, through the development of a specific high standard tourism offer, linked to its natural and cultural heritage, with the purpose of capturing the potential income generation for Chile. The project had as main goal to enhance the competitiveness of the tourism sector of special interests in Tierra del Fuego, a key sector of Southern Patagonia, through the dissemination and transfer of technologies and knowledge, acquired in over 10 years of research and projects, onto the territory and local agents. These Cultural Routes build an innovative offer, capable of structuring the diverse touristic resources and strengthening the basis for the development of a new stage of national and international tourism market, located on the southern extreme of Chile and America.

*Key words:*

Cultural Routes, tourism, Tierra del Fuego

### **Introduction**

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■ The project of Cultural Routes, developed for the Chilean Tierra del Fuego, collects the interest of the government of Chile to promote the tourism sector, to boost the economy by generating new employment alternatives and to “contribute to the development of distinctive, sustainable and high quality offers, addressing the challenges of innovation associated with capturing the country’s potential for income generation present in its natural and cultural heritage”. The project is also linked with the guidelines of CORFO for the promotion and innovation of special interest tourism industry. This sector of the economy demanded the design of a competitive offer for the Tierra del Fuego Island, in order to position this region as a new touristic front for the national and international market, with a Chilean offer located in a key sector of the Patagonia, on the southern extreme of Chile and America.

The project had, as primary goal, to enhance innovation in the tourism sector of special interests of Tierra del Fuego through the diffusion and transfer of technologies and knowledge —acquired in 10 years of research and projects— in order to articulate and assess the heritage of the island, with a set of Cultural Routes. The technologies and knowledge were transferred both to the productive sector and local agents (six associated operators, five partner institutions and fifteen regional entities, including the provincial governorship of Tierra del Fuego) with the purpose of incorporating technological improvements to its products, management models and marketing, and thus configuring the corporate territorial brand named “Cultural Routes in Tierra del Fuego”. Diffusion and technology transfer were an important aspect of the project since it facilitated the takeover and handling of the products generated through field activities, meetings, seminars and workshops,

so that entrepreneurs and local actors settled upon proper conditions to implement Cultural Routes and offer a competitive and innovative product capable of structuring the tourist resources —both tangible and intangible, consolidated and latent— in the national and international tourist market.

Tierra del Fuego has been activated by the human being through social, economic and material events, acquiring cultural and aesthetic values, which interlace its history, territory and landscape. In this sense, it is possible to declare that if the landscapes are the natural resources in Tierra del Fuego, the cultural interpretation provides them with added value, in terms of retrieving the memory, strengthening the identity and assessing the heritage.

It is on this hypothesis that the Cultural Routes are drawn onto Tierra del Fuego.

## The island of tierra del fuego

■ Tierra del Fuego, the largest island in the American continent, is located south of 52° South Latitude. It is characterized by a complex set of layers that identifies it:

a. Its status as special and extreme zone is associated with a high level of isolation; an harsh climate conditions that affects both accessibility and communication; a scarce and highly dispersed population; low socio-economic development; great difficulty of access to public services, education and health; and critical distance from the political and administrative centers of power and decision making.



Figure 1



Figure 2

b. Lakes and mountain ranges, glaciers and meadows, forests and stars meet in its geography. The contours of its shores are rich in bays, fjords, canals, sinuses and glaciers. Other attractions are: the Lomas Bay wetland — declared a Ramsar site—; the Tres Arroyos archeological site; Blanco Lake and Lynch Lake; La Paciencia mountain range and the Diamante Hill; the geographic fault composed by the Almirantazgo sine, the Azopardo River and Lake Fagnano; Yendegaia Bay; the Darwin Range.

c. The collection of narratives and maps composed by navigators, travelers and European scientists, is very rich. From Pigafetta to Darwin, from Sarmiento de Gamboa to Gusinde, the explorations succeeded to Tierra del Fuego, from the discovery of the Estrecho de Magallanes in 1520, bequeathing a vast legacy of cartographic representations, writings and testimonies to posterity.



Figure 3



Figure 4

d. The rich Aboriginal culture of the Selknam was settled in Tierra del Fuego for about 110 centuries. The domain of its territory was associated with the institution of Haruwen, which destined the exclusive use of certain areas

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for each family group. Its limits demanded strict observance, given their violation was a cause of strife between lineages. The Selknam enjoyed rituals and traditions such as the Hain, their main ceremony for the initiation of young people.

e. The set of human settlements related to economic colonization and its subsequent productive use, dated from the late nineteenth century and based on the exploitation of the natural resources of the Island. It started with the process of land grants, which led to a territorial planning with the formation of sheep estancias, which were imposed on the traditional Selknam structure. The city of Porvenir was founded in 1894—in the bay of the same name— as the capital of the Chilean Tierra del Fuego. In 1958, the National Petrol Company (ENAP) founded the company town of Cerro Sombrero. Other oil enclaves on the Island are: Manantiales (1945), Puerto Percy (1950) and Cullen (1962).

## Cultural routes

■ The Cultural Routes in Tierra del Fuego were developed with the purpose of designing a tourism initiative that would offer an attractive vision of the Tierra del Fuego territory, intended for a controlled number of visitors, that is the special interests tourists (scientific tourism, rural tourism, eco tourism and adventure tourism, among others). The project is the result of a shared process with authorities, regional actors and local operators, ensuring a proper balance between transformation and local development. Its settings was based on geographical areas associated with events, territorial functions, activities and natural environments, that contain both aesthetic and cultural values, so to make a sustainable use of natural resources and the cultural heritage of the Island, encouraging its conservation and involving local communities in tourism activities.

The Cultural Routes offer new experiences for special interest visitors, related to local culture, the unexplored magic of the territory and its landscapes, its biodiversity, its territorial heritage and cultural wealth. They are based on a circuit system linked by key areas, exceeding the linear sequence of courses. Each one of the Routes, even if specific, can be combined with another in certain convergent sections thus forming broader routes. This is where the highlights of the geography coincide with historical events and social aspects, thus creating areas with higher cultural weight and territorial intensity.

The Cultural Routes developed by this CORFO project are:

1. Selknam Route, hunting and fire territories.
2. Estancias Route and the sheep ranch occupation of the territory.
3. Wood Route in the north Almirantazgo.
4. Wetlands Route of birds and waters.

Two cases will be presented for the occasion of this paper: the Selknam Route, hunting and fire territories and the Estancias Route and the sheep ranch occupation of the territory.

## Selknam route, hunting and fire territories

■ The Selknam Route is related to the natives of Tierra del Fuego, the Selknam. The proposed route links geography with history and aboriginal mysticism. It considers specific points including the Bahía Inútil area, with the Marazzi rock and the fish weirs, the place known as Mount of Ona —Tres Arroyos site—, and the archaeological sites in Punta Catalina, Dos María and Florentina and Blanco Lake.



Figure 5

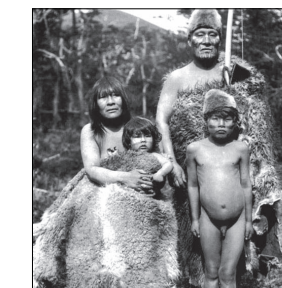


Figure 6

*The process of land grants began in 1883 by president Santa María (1881 – 1886) and continued by president Balmaceda (1886 – 1891) in the region of Magallanes —both in the continent as in Tierra del Fuego—. It consisted in the delivery of lands for rent to livestock companies for a maximum period of 25 years. Estancia is the Chilean name for the sheep ranch.*

*The National Petrol Company (Empresa Nacional del Petróleo – ENAP) is a state company, founded in 1950 by the Corporación de Fomento de la Producción (CORFO), in order to commercially, manage and exploit the deposits discovered in Magallanes. CORFO was responsible for prospecting for oil, both in the Estrecho de Magallanes and Tierra del Fuego.*

Tierra del Fuego was the homeland of the aboriginal Selknam for about 11,000 years. They were physically gifted people, who eventually reached an extraordinary adaptation to the particular geographical and environmental characteristics of the territory, with a metabolic adjustment body temperature a degree higher than ours and an average height of 1.80 m. All these features provided the nomadic life in search of food, by hunting birds and animals and gathering fruits. Among the resources they had, the guanaco turned out to be an essential animal for their survival, as was the bison to the Indians of the North American plains, providing meat for food and skins to meet the needs for shelter, the cover for huts and other craft uses.

The huts of the Selknam, seen as architectural expression, were based on a structure of light rods that women bore during transhumance, as a basis for a construction resistant to high winds. This was complemented by more robust rods, if they were at hand, and then lined the outside with skins, bark and branches, leaving a top opening for the smoke to escape and another in east direction, opposite of the prevailing wind, to be used as a door. The strongest huts were located towards the south of the Island, in the forest area. They were reused and improved as required.

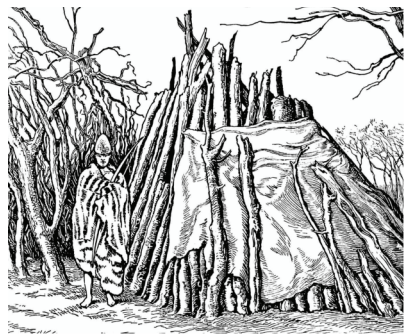


Figure 8



Figure 9

Considering that these aboriginal were hunters and gatherers, the weapons used in hunting were of vital importance. The Selknam bow, a remarkable piece of craftsmanship, and the arrow, object of refined design and construction, are central to its heritage. The feathering of the arrow was provided so that the arrow was propelled in rotary turns, better suited to straight flight and for greater efficiency in the hunting.

The Selknam managed to rule the territory through the institution of the Haruwen, consisting of exclusive occupancy of certain well demarcated geographical areas for each family group, related to geographical features such as watercourses or accurate spots amongst the plain. These limits were transmitted from generation to generation and were to be strictly respected, as a violation of the allotted ancestral territories could cause the outbreak of disputes between the lineages. Each of these areas was inhabited by the family that corresponded to a group of blood relatives that were linked patrilineal to previous generations. In each Haruwen, ancestors were represented in the form of a river, lake, mountain, meadow or forest. Selknam, at death, chose to become part of the territory, and thus forming the earth and the cosmos. Martin Gusinde (1886-1969), Austrian priest and ethnographer, drew a map of the Haruwen from his interpretation of orally transmitted data. According to this map, towards the mid-nineteenth century there were 38 Haruwen for a population of about 3,800 people, while recent investigations by Spanish researcher Clara García Moro suggest a population of 1,500 individuals.

Hain's ceremony was essential as a rite of passage for young people to enter adulthood. To perform it, men were secluded in the ceremonial hut, where they painted their bodies and covered with large masks, playing a set of mythical creatures that inspired an ancient and sacred history. Among other tests, candidates had to face a hunt that extended for several days, which stimulated courage, endurance, handling the bow and arrow, protection from the storms, decoding traces and pursuit of animals.



Figure 10

The bestowal of land grants was the beginning of the end for the Selknam. The settlers invaded the Selknam Haruwen causing a struggle which ended with their extermination by well-armed and paid individuals. Genocide joined the confinement of the few surviving indigenous in the Salesian missions of San Rafael and Río Grande, where European spread diseases ended up destroying this wonderful race. The last Selknam, Ángela Loij, died in 1974.

A very important element of the Selknam Route consists of scientific literature, film and sound recordings related to them. The main source of information is the work of Martin Gusinde, published under the title *Die Feuerland Indianer*, in 1931. Gusinde made four expeditions to Tierra del Fuego, from 1918 to 1924, under the patronage of the Ministry of Public Instruction of Chile. His work was published in Spanish. A complementary source of great interest is the work of Anne Chapman (1922 – 2010), who studied, interpreted and reconstructed, from the female perspective, the social and spiritual structure of the Selknam. For her work it was essential to meet the last survivors of the Selknam people: Lola Kiepja and Angela Loij.

There are some very important film records of Alberto M. De Agostini (1883 – 1960), a Salesian priest of Italian origin, who explored the mountain ranges of Tierra del Fuego and Patagonia. Agostini made several expeditions to the Darwin Cordillera, between 1913 and 1924; and in 1956 he led the climbing of Mount Sarmiento, the highest of the Island. He also filmed a documentary, where he portrays its productive activities and the lives of the indigenous, between 1915 and 1930. Finally, an additional source is the compilation of 34 Selknam songs, performed by Lola Kiepja, entitled "Hain", recorded by Anne Chapman in 1966.

### Estancias route and the sheep ranch occupation of the territory

■ The Estancias Route provides an overview related to an important form of economic occupation of Tierra del Fuego, which is sheep farming. For this Route, seven so called "first generation" estancias, built between 1885 and 1915, and four sections of estancias of the time have been selected. All of them contain architectural pieces of tremendous interest, located on the grazing plains of Tierra del Fuego. The Route has points and tour lines of particular interest, covering a large area of the Island, especially in the pampas, north of parallel 54° south latitude.

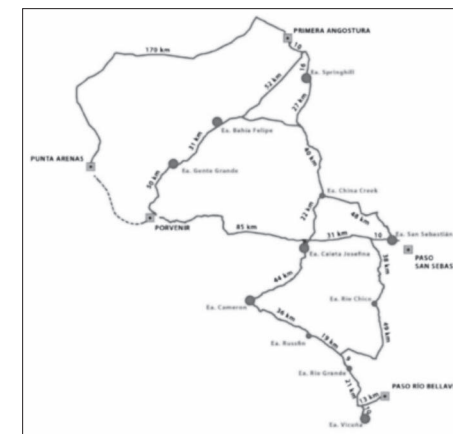


Figure 11

The sheep estancias —main attraction of this Route— appeared around 1880, when the first companies were formed in Punta Arenas to apply to the process of land grants, organized first by President Santa María and next by president Balmaceda, in order to promote sovereignty and colonization through sheep farming activities in Tierra del Fuego.

The first concessions covered huge tracts of land. Those were granted for the period 1885-1915 to the following companies: Wehrhahn, Hobbs y Compañía (120,000 ha), Tierra del Fuego Sheep Farming Co. (180,000 ha), Philip Bay Sheep Farming Co. (170,000 ha), Sociedad Explotadora de Tierra del Fuego (1,009,000 ha) y Sociedad Industrial y Ganadera de Magallanes (190,000 ha). In the following concession process, the Treasury recovered

Prieto, A. (2008) *El arco y la flecha de los Selk'nam*.  
Gusinde, M. (1982) *Los indios de la Tierra del Fuego*.  
Gusinde, M. (1982) *Los indios de la Tierra del Fuego*.  
Chapman, A. (1986) *Los Selk'nam. La vida de los Onas*.

part of the broad concessional surface areas, and handed them to smaller owners, ranging to the south of the Río Grande and laying the foundations of the current subdivision of the Island.

The Route includes a tour by the “estancia cascos” of Gente Grande (1885), Springhill (1890), Caleta Josefina (1894), San Sebastián (1895), Bahía Felipe (1896), Cameron (1904) and Vicuña (1915). As a complement, it incorporates sections of Río Grande (1906), Río Chico (1906), Russfin (1920) and China Creek (1924), all founded by the listed companies. On this Route it is possible to see a specific form of land use, cast through a network of roads, small piers, fences, corrals and rural settlements, for the breeding and grazing of sheep for wool production, meat and its related products.

The estancia cascos constitute multiple, discrete and dispersed architectural landmarks, useful as reference and guidance in the vastness of the landscape, while also very attractive for visitors. Its basic components were articulated as small settlements, which came to house more than a hundred workers during the sheep shearing. Within these quarters, basic forms of civility were created, giving life to small villages made up of buildings of different sizes, uses and categories. The buildings, that would meet the production and residential needs, were made of wood structures, covered with corrugated metal sheets of galvanized iron. Its dimensions were defined by the English imperial system, creating fairing forms to resist the strong winds of the Patagonia. Among the most striking elements that these estancia cascos present to the traveler, are the shearing sheds, large sheds to house the complete task of cutting the wool in the rugged southern climate; and the management house, located in strategic locations to visually control and dominate the entire operation of the activities carried in the settlement. All residences had good fireplaces —chimneys, stoves or ranges— which are essential in these latitudes, all as fulfilling a fundamental role in shaping domestic spaces around the fireplace. In turn, the galleries of the houses have played a fundamental role, since they allow capturing the qualities of light and views of the landscape from a place between the territory weathering and the well tempered domestic premises, between the vastness of the geographical space and the bounded of the residence.

Over the twentieth century, the sustained expansion of sheep farming was shrinking because of severe weather, as well as transport and communication difficulties between the estancias and the town of Porvenir, the only city in the Island until 1958. Finally, the mono producing condition of the estancias, along with other factors such as the deterioration of soils, the reduction of areas in operation and conservative technical management of the sheep farms, caused many of the abandonment of the great estancias, not leading to stable and complementary population centers.

The Gente Grande estancia was founded in 1885, the year in which the society Wehrhann, Hobbs y Compañía received a first grant of 123,000 ha on the south bank of the Estrecho de Magallanes. The lease was formalized in 1893 and two years later the ranch was in working condition. This Society was the first to be installed in the area, with sheep from the Malvinas Islands (Falklands). Here started the marauding of the indigenous on the sheep and the subsequent clashes with the settlers. From the original complex still remains the management house, the oldest of Tierra del Fuego, built in 1885. The original land grant was renewed several times, while gradually reducing its dimensions, to end in 1958 when the last grant awarded to the Company expired.



Figure 12



Figure 13

The Springhill estancia was founded in 1890 by the British company The Tierra del Fuego Sheep Farming Co., formed in 80% of British capital with participation of Portuguese-born businessman José Nogueira with the remaining 20%. In 1885 the Company agreed a lease of 180,000 ha. The management house is located within the

De Agostini A. M. (1933). *Terre Magellaniche*.  
Chapman, A. (2002) (grabación). Hain. Taller Experimental Cuerpos Pintados, Santiago.  
“Estancia cascos” consist in a set of buildings including the shearing shed, management house, staff quarters, kitchen-dining room and other facilities. In cases of larger size they can even be considered as small townships.  
The metal sheets of galvanized iron were imported from Wolverhampton, England.

Espora peninsula, in a place known as Springhill. In 1904 the Company sold its rights to the Sociedad La Riqueza de Magallanes and early 1906 were acquired by the Sociedad Explotadora de Tierra del Fuego. The lands that made the lease remained in the hands of the Sociedad Explotadora until 1938. The estancia ranch consisted in 29 buildings, of which currently remain the shearing shed and the management house.

Estancia Caleta Josefina was founded in 1894 by Mauricio Braun, director of the Sociedad Explotadora de Tierra del Fuego, an entity established in 1893 to develop the breeding sheep in the fields of the huge concession given to José Nogueira in 1890. From the beginning, this was the most important establishment of the Company in the Island, due to its size, the magnitude and high quality of its facilities, and its vast supply of sheep, features which turned it into the most prominent estancia of Tierra del Fuego. Its huge size required subdivision into sections, in a system of smaller estancias to ease its operational management. This estancia lasted until 1958, when the last concession granted to the Sociedad expired. Caleta Josefina had numerous buildings: the shearing shed, a management house, houses for the second administrator, accountant, foremen and cadets; a worker’s diner, houses for laborers, among others.



Figure 14



Figure 15

Estancia San Sebastian was founded in 1895, as a second establishment of the Sociedad Explotadora de Tierra del Fuego on the Island, with 210,000 ha leased to the state. The buildings were located close to the border with Argentina, at a site near the Atlantic bay of San Sebastián, which takes its name. This estancia was an important sheep farm, both for its excellent handling and quality of their livestock, as well as its facilities. It remained property of the Sociedad Explotadora de Tierra del Fuego until 1958, when the concession expired. The settlement consisted of 36 buildings, a two story shearing shed the most notably among them.

Estancia Bahía Felipe, also known as Río del Oro, was founded in 1896 by British company The Philip Bay Sheep Farming and Co., with a concession of 170,000 ha, a fifth of which was property of Mauricio Braun. In early 1906 was acquired by the Sociedad Explotadora de Tierra del Fuego. It operated until 1938, which was the last lease concession with the Treasury. From the original settlement still remains the management house, which has the particularity of having been built in England, transported in parts to Tierra del Fuego to be finally assembled in the vicinity of the Río del Oro, around 1896.



Figure 17

Figure 16

Estancia Cameron was founded in 1904, as a subsection of estancia Caleta Josefina. It became the third production establishment of the Sociedad Explotadora de Tierra del Fuego, using grounds of estancia Caleta Josefina and estancia San Sebastián, with an independent administration. The raising of sheep was supplemented with Hereford cattle. At the same time, sawmills were installed to exploit forest resources, producing construction timber and fuel wood for all establishments of the Company. The Agrarian Reform led by the government expropriated the estancia in 1971, passing into the hands of a cooperative that remained its owner until 2008, when it was sold to a private company. It has a size close to 100,000 ha. The settlement is more complex than most of the estancias, since the facilities of the Timaukel Municipality are the next to it.

Estancia Vicuña was founded in 1915. It was the last of the first generation great estancias, established in the fiscal area of the southern part of the Island, between Blanco Lake and the border with Argentina, located on the top land suitable for pastoral use and timber production. It was first granted to Ramón Moisés de la Fuente in 1901. Finally, the rights were transferred to the Sociedad Industrial y Ganadera de Magallanes, in 1913. This Company operated until 1958, when the Treasury, as owner of the land, ended the concession in order to recover the area for further subdivision and re-colonization. This estancia features a large management house with two levels and turrets, besides six other buildings, including the shearing shed, which remain as attractive landmarks to visitors.



Figure 18

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## Figures

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