

## Parks and Re-Creation

Conservationists Kristine and Doug Tompkins have spent a decade restoring a swath of Chilean Patagonia to its original splendor—and creating a whole new kind of national park.



The center of Chacabuco Valley, an hour from the Lodge at Valle Chacabuco, in Chile's Patagonia Park.

**THE HISTORIC RANCLAND** in Chilean Patagonia's Chacabuco Valley is a hiker's utopia of snow-dusted volcanoes and rolling savanna. But a century of overgrazing had all but wiped out the grassland, which left endemic species like guanaco deer near extinction. "Every ecosystem in Patagonia is found in Chacabuco, and it is critical to preserve it," says Kristine Tompkins, a former CEO of the apparel brand Patagonia. She and her husband, Doug, the founder of the North Face, have

protected some 2.2 million acres across the region—including the 170,000 acres of Chacabuco that their nonprofit, Conservacion Patagonica, bought for \$10 million in 2004. Since then, the group has pulled up fencing, relocated livestock to allow grassland to heal, and worked to protect resident wildlife. "We have a big responsibility to bring species back," Tompkins says. The entire area is now known as Patagonia Park ([patagoniapark.org](http://patagoniapark.org)), with a six-room eco-lodge, a camp-

ground, and miles of new trails. This fall, they'll open the Stone House Campground, a home base for hikers in the middle of the valley. The eventual goal: to donate the land to the Chilean government within the next few years as part of the creation of a vast, 640,000-acre reserve called Patagonia National Park. What happens after the handover? "I don't think we'll ever be done," Tompkins admits. "It's poignant when you create these places that you can then return to." — LINDSEY OLANDER

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