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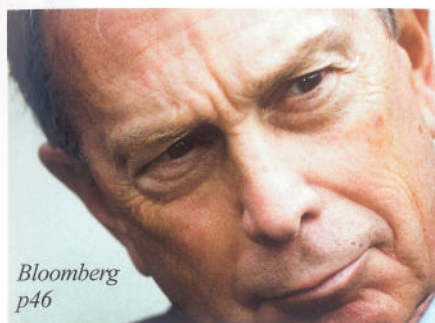
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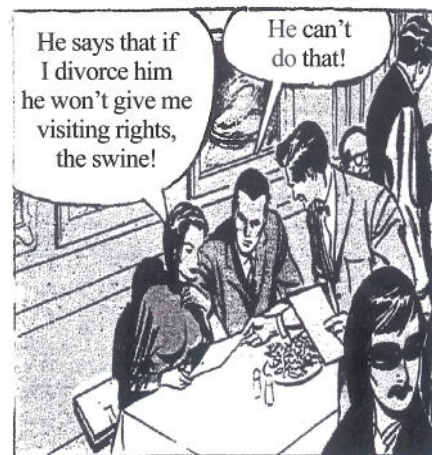


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Connoisseur

Final frontiers

Five travel writers journey far and wide to find the world's last unexplored wildernesses

Patagonia

LUCINDA BARING

Arriving in Patagonia, the region spanning Argentina and Chile at the southernmost tip of South America, I really felt I'd reached the end of the earth. The journey is an epic but rewarding one – this was the most spectacular scenery I'd ever seen. My destination was Hotel Explora in the Torres del Paine National Park in Chile. This small enclave of comfort, surrounded by wide green lagoons and sheltered by snow-capped mountains, is designed specifically to cosset you after a day spent amongst the elements. Windows span the

length of every room and with no mobile reception, television or internet in the bedrooms, it is easy to forget the life you have left behind.

Patagonia is the only land in the 51st latitude and the wind blows from west to east with incredible force, bringing with it the most changeable weather. You literally experience four seasons in one day. One minute the sun is shining, the next it's hailing. But no matter: whatever weather you're facing, you get up and go. You can't help it – and that is part of Patagonia's unrivalled appeal. The energy is intoxicating, with everyone from 90-year-old women to three-year old children desperate to get out there and explore. There are horses to be

ridden, glaciers to be crossed and the towers from which the park takes its name to be climbed. I challenge anyone not to leave feeling dramatically revitalised and more than a little sad. Being enveloped by such a dramatic landscape is a once in a lifetime experience and as the sunrise cast its hazy pink glow over the mountains and lagoon on my last day, I realised this view alone had made the arduous journey more than worthwhile.

HOW TO GET THERE

Exsus Travel: 020 7337 9010;
www.exsus.com

Lucinda Baring is assistant editor of Spectator Business