



Travel

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## From Antwerp to Zanzibar: travel writers' discoveries of 2022

### Stanley Stewart

PATA LODGE, PATAGONIA, CHILE



The greenhouse and some of the cabins at Pata Lodge

You arrive through enchanted woods. A steep road twists downwards, like an upside-down beanstalk, through coihue trees bearded with lichen and knee-deep in bamboo and giant ferns. At the bottom is [Pata Lodge](#), in a small verdant valley enclosed by an amphitheatre of Andean peaks. Across swaths of grass are a handful of stylish wooden cabins, a greenhouse at the centre of fenced gardens, a rustic two-room school house, and a wide curve of the Rio Futaleufú, where rainbow trout lurk in glassy shallows. Deep in Chilean Patagonia, Pata feels like a lost world.

It is home to a small group of enterprising young families from São Paulo in Brazil who have come here in search of a more environmentally sensitive future. They want to protect these forests, find a healthy work/life balance, and create a sustainable holiday retreat for visitors to the Futaleufú River. This is slow travel: fly-fishing, hiking and kayaking between meals sourced from the gardens and evenings spent watching the sun fade across the faces of those wonderful mountains.

But don't get too comfortable. The Futaleufú is one of the world's great white-water rafting rivers. A few miles downstream, where powerful currents are compressed between canyon walls, it becomes a cauldron of white water. In an adrenaline-rush that leaves you buzzing, spectacular rapids pile up in quick succession as canyon-sized holes open in the river's belly and foaming walls of water rear above the raft. For 90 minutes you are at the mercy of the river. There is no better ride on Earth. I couldn't get enough of it.

*Stanley Stewart travelled as a guest of Plan South America ([plansouthamerica.com](http://plansouthamerica.com)). There are six private cabins for guests at Pata Lodge ([pata.cl](http://pata.cl)); accommodation and half-board for two people costs \$600 per night*