

## Trip Report Torres del Paine National Park, Patagonia, Chile November – December 2024

### SUMMARY:

Garry Oye, a Board Director & Volunteer Trip Leader with Conservation Volunteers International Program (ConservationVIP®), traveled from the United States to Torres del Paine National Park, Chile in November – December 2024 to volunteer on two projects - Base Torres trail construction and cleanup of Campamento Italiano (Old Italian Camp).

The focus of the work on the Base Torres project on this trip was to continue working with local trail builders on the trail on Las Torres Reserve lands below Refugio Chileno. Since the construction of new trail on the Las Torres Reserve land began in February 2022, five km of trail have been completed, and three km are under construction with a projected completion date of April 2025. In order to open this new trail, Las Torres Reserve has planned three hard span bridges to be constructed in late 2025, which would allow a projected trail opening in January 2026.



*Base Torres Trail*

The project at Old Italian Camp addressed the initial efforts to begin environmental cleanup and restoration of the camp which had been closed to campers when a new Italian Camp campground was built.

## DETAILS:

**Base Torres trail** in Torres del Paine National Park is the trail which leads to the base of The Towers, the massive granite spires which give Torres del Paine National Park its name. The original trail to The Towers was never designed to be sustainable. It ascended steeply in places, traversed across unstable slopes, and passed through some unhardened wet spots. On the busiest days, thousands of hikers attempt to make it up this trail. In addition, parts of the trail have been used by pack animals. The heavy use and erosion have caused many problems.

As described in [an earlier post](#), since late 2021, ConservationVIP has been working to construct a new sustainable trail to replace the old trail. [A previous report detailed](#) the work done by the end of last season to construction the section of trail in the Ascencio River Canyon up to bridge site #1. This season we focused on building new trail from bridge site #2 up to Refugio Chileno. In addition to Garry, a trail expert from the U.S., Victoria Winch, provided technical support to the local [AMA](#) crews which were recruited by Las Torres Reserve.

The major challenges building this section of trail involved working in steep terrain, cutting through dense Calafate, removing the Calafate roots, and weather which is the ever-present challenge in Patagonia.



*Cutting through Calafate*



*Base Torres Trail Builders*

**Old Italian Camp**, located at the entrance to the French Valley on the very popular “W” hiking trail, was used as a campground for over 30 years. Although the campground was closed when a new Italian Camp was established 3 years ago, the old toilet buildings remained. Use of the bathroom facilities at the old camp had exceeded the capacity of the facilities and needed to be remediated. On this trip, there was a weeklong effort to begin cleanup at Old Italian Camp. Garry Oye developed a cleanup

plan and secured approval from CONAF for Phase One. ConservationVIP engaged assistance from Kolaboratorio, an environmental firm in Santiago, and together we dismantled 5 toilet buildings. CONAF has committed to moving the waste from the site by helicopter. There are still numerous underground tanks & pits that will need some type of remediation.



*Photos of dismantled Italian Camp buildings*

## **SUMMARY:**

ConservationVIP volunteers Garry & Victoria provided technical support and constructed new trail. Hikers on the trail, guides, refugio staff and hotel staff all thanked us for the work we were doing.

### Accomplishments:

2 US ConservationVIP volunteers: 320 hours

70 meters of newly constructed hiker trail (tread)

160 meters of brushing

Phase One Cleanup of Old Italian Camp completed

Garry Oye, Director  
Conservation Volunteers International Program