

THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW 1313  
TOURISM: ROGERS IN MADRID  
GMP S LEHTER BAHNHOF  
DEL SOL IN PATAGONIA

46 52 : HOTEL REMOTA  
PATAGONIA, CHILE

2006 JULY  
EMAP CONSTRUCT  
LONDON, ENGLAND



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This is the third in a series of remarkable hotels in remote locations by Chilean architect German del Sol. At the opening tip of South America lies Patagonia, the southern part of the world, a hardly beautiful series of mountains, fields, glaciers and grassy plains. Del Sol built his first hotel here and then headed to Chile's northern territory to repeat the feat in the Atacama Desert (28 February 1996). Now he

has returned to Patagonia to the falling village of Puerto Natales on the edge of the Torres del Paine National Park. Like its predecessor, this latest hotel is conceived as an elegant, hospitable town offering travellers and jobbed activities stages to experience the intensity of nature, but it is far removed from the rugged terrain of the typical luxury sublime. Instead, del Sol responds to the rhythms of place

and history and remembers there is a recognisably contemporary language, as clearly raising his architecture in his surroundings.

Here his inspiration is the region's robustly functional farm buildings that organically shape the landscape. Since its introduction in the 1970s, when farming has been a profitable staple of the Patagonian economy, covering a rich remainder of buildings

and forms (for storing and drying sheepskin) along with sheepfold's, stables, arenas, barns and enclosures. Of the built culture, del Sol says 'Latin America has an ancient tradition of works of architecture that stand in the midst of nature just to bring signs of life to places where fragments of wilderness exist for just as long as night, or where people gather there to a table to celebrate what again their women "do".'

The new hotel is that remaining sign of life in the remnants of nature. From a distance, it appears as a series of black forms hunched in the landscape, their bunker-like appearance suggesting an archaeological or topographic connection with site. The structural structure of each 'tower' is clad in insulated glass panels finished with an opaque membrane to protect against the corrosive effects of sun and wind. An external

cladding of black gravel gives the structure a brooding, monolithic quality that recalls the basic forms of the Torres del Paine massif. After dark, cool yellow light, made from regular stacks of glowing gneiss in the building's 'cave' facades, in the evening glimmers of the Patagonian plains the evening lights are a beacon of welcome, celebrating human presence.

The hotel comprises a pair of blocks, alongside guest

rooms (each 77 bedrooms) and a service building that houses spaces for dining, entertainment and administration. A pool, spa and pool deck complete the complex. The effect is to break down what could have been an imposing mass into more manageable, humanly scaled elements. Flanking these sites of a rough square, the main building and bathroom wings provide a large open courtyard. The arrangement

recalls the earlier *Atacama* project (but where the desert plateau called for a small, rectangular courtyard edged with a black concrete base, the current opens a rocky grassed area and instead with a handful of buildings). Del Sol sees it as a distillation of the attitude and ingenuity of the surrounding landscape, a kind of Patagonian 'Le Corbusier' in the heart of the hotel. The various parts are connected by covered canals

## WORLD'S END HOTEL

This hotel in remote Patagonia treads thoughtfully and lightly in stunning landscape.

HOTEL PATAGONIA, CHILE  
ARCHITECT  
GERMAN DEL SOL

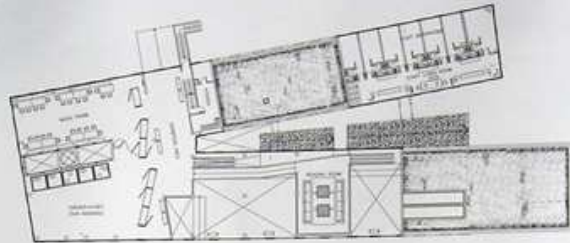
Inspired by the minimalist tradition of Patagonia, the new hotel is a topographic response to the landscape.



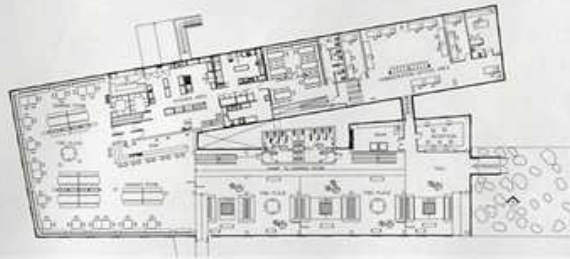


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second floor



first floor



ground floor plan (scale approx 1:500)

HOTEL, PATAGONIA, CHILE  
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walkways, so guests are exposed to the elements as they move around the complex.

The main building is structured around a two-pronged plan (a bit like a clothes peg), that winds up and around the slightly sloping site. This creates two sorts of spaces for front and back-of-house functions. The principal prong, addressing the central courtyard, contains generous lounge areas and the entrance hall, while the secondary prong, facing away from the courtyard, is devoted to administration and staff accommodation. At the building's north-west end (the equivalent of south-east orientation in the northern hemisphere), the point of their intersection is marked by a two-storey fulcrum of dining room, bar and kitchen at lower level, with a conservatory, music room and exhibition area above. A mezzanine reading room is hoisted over the lounge so that guests can retreat, yet still feel connected to hotel life.

With its labyrinth of ramps, stairs and changes of levels, the building is, in some ways, an abstraction of the landscape. More explicitly, the roof is carpeted in Patagonian wild grasses, and the decidedly rustic furniture was crafted by local carpenters from large pieces of dead lenga wood scavenged from the forests that thrive in the region's lowlands. The dark wood is counterpointed by boldly coloured native textiles which are animated by the changing light. Targeted at the luxe end of the market, Remota is, undoubtedly, a well-appointed vantage point from which to contemplate and experience the natural world, yet German del Sol's ecologically responsive architecture is a sensitive mediation between man and nature that treads thoughtfully and lightly in this awesome wilderness at the southern end of the earth.

CATHERINE SLESSOR

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Photographs  
All photographs by Heidi J. Eversen except  
nos 5 and 6 which are by Felipe Carrón



Place lounge area, overlooking the courtyard and conservatory. Secondary lounge area is a mezzanine reading room.  
A conservatory with outdoor seating overlooking the courtyard.  
Bedroom wing rooms are lit by a double-height space.

