



Plastic Bag Ban in Punta Arenas Helps Preserve the Environment

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IN AN EFFORT TO KEEP PATAGONIA PRISTINE AND NATURAL, SOUTHERN CHILEAN CITIES BAN THE USE OF PLASTIC BAGS.

PATAGONIA — Plastic bags are the modern environmental torment: they pile up in landfills, pollute oceans, and choke wildlife. Plastic bags are made from polyethylene products that cause not only an environmental hazard, but also an eye sore.

Chileans use about 200 plastic bags per person each year, which translates into 250 million plastic bags used in the country each month. 90 percent of these bags end up in landfills, according to the Environment Ministry. Plastic bags can take up to 500 years to decompose.

About 26 million plastic bags are used annually in Punta Arenas, and the tourist town is now taking a stand against this alarming figure. Punta Arenas has passed an ordinance to ban

the commercial use of the polyethylene products in an effort to protect and conserve the surrounding environment and wildlife.

On Jan. 23, 2014, the municipal council of Punta Arenas put into effect a law that gives businesses one year to phase out “the use of any kind of polyethylene or plastic polymer bags,” and replace them with reusable or compostable bags.

Chile Chico and Pucón of the Aisen region, have also begun phasing out plastic bags. As a tourist region, it is important for Patagonia to protect the natural beauty that attracts tourists.

Exceptions to the plastic bag ban are containers used in the wrapping of perishable items, and vacuum-sealed waste containers. Violation of the law will be punishable with a fine of up to \$360 USD.

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