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word of mouth

Art of the spa Chile

Thermo dynamic

Under the volcano and waterfall at Termas Geométricas

Geómetra del Sur, the youngest of the two Espuma Hotels in Panguelmo and the Atacama Desert, has just completed the latest project, the Termas Geométricas. Situated near Panguelmo in Chile's Lake District, set in an area of volcanoes and geothermal springs (hence the name), the design features a 300-meter-long stone-walk leading up a lush green canyon to the head of a thundering waterfall. The route is punctuated with 17 hot and four cold, stone-lined pools simulating pure geothermal water, as well as cascades, natural showers, water wheels and oaks. Like the sculptor Richard Long, whose land works del Sol so admired, he and his junior partner José Luis Ibañez drew on local materials and artisans to create the Termas.

But the 4,000-sq-meter spa has more than just hot and cold pools; there is also a dining or gathering room, hand-hewn benches

set around a stone-lined fire where guests can sip Chilean wine and enjoy heavy rain if good temperatures. At night, the walk is lined with candles, and although the official opening time is 10pm, you can often stay until midnight.

The best place to stay in this area is Hotel Antumala, a 90-minute drive away. Set in 13 acres of gardens and stone pathways on a lava flow, Antumala's spa retreat was created in the 1960s by owner Guillermo Polvo and architect Jorge Elías, and started a huge influence on del Sol, he laughs the everything I need to know, he says.

WANT HEARD? Termas Geométricas opens 10am-7pm daily. Admission: 6,000 pesos (about US\$6). Hotel Antumala: (09 58 45 44101); www.antumala.com is a 90-minute drive from Panguelmo airport, on the southern edge of Lake Villarrica, doubles from US\$140.