

TIDES, CURRENTS, AND TIDAL SURGES

Tides in the Comau Estuary are highly variable. The daily range can vary between a maximum of 7 meters to a minimum of 2 meters in a month (see tides from the first week of February of 2006), according to the lunar phase. Among other things, this allows locals to float and run their boats aground with ease. Furthermore, the water covers and then exposes large areas of the shoreline, thereby creating a very unique variety of organisms that have adapted to extreme environmental changes. The currents caused by the waves have a mild effect, typically varying in speed by one or two knots. During the winter months, the outgoing current can increase slightly in intensity due to the increase in fresh water from the rivers and channels that flow into the eastern arm of the estuary.

Tidal surges from open sea are almost non-existent due to the presence of the neighboring island of Chiloé, as well as the location of the Comau Fjord. Waters are normally calm, only with a slight break due to the presence of low, long waves caused by the wind. These are typically produced by the orographic winds channeled in by the steep, rocky walls of the fjord. The tidal surges caused by this wind reach their maximum size of 60-80 centimeters in height and 5 to 6 meters in length at the mouth of the Comau Channel, close to the mouths of the Calhuelmo and Quintupeu Fjords. These mountain winds occasionally batter the region with great violence and create risks for smaller boats.

