



Argentina's Southern Patagonia into Tierra del Fuego Trip Notes

February 17 – March 4, 2015

I was in Northern Patagonia in November 2014 and so enchanted at what I saw and what I heard about Southern Patagonia that I committed then to return. I'm about 99% committed to return again in March/April 2016, legs willing. There is so much to see.

Highlights

El Calafate

- Los Glaciares National Park is gateway to the lakes and glaciers
- Larger of cities after Bariloche
- Home to Perito Moreno Glacier and Estancia Christina at Upsala Glacier
- Four days with a wonderful guide Cecilia and going into El Chaltan where she lives right next door to my hotel.
- The picture for El Calafate is taken at the Upsala Glacier.



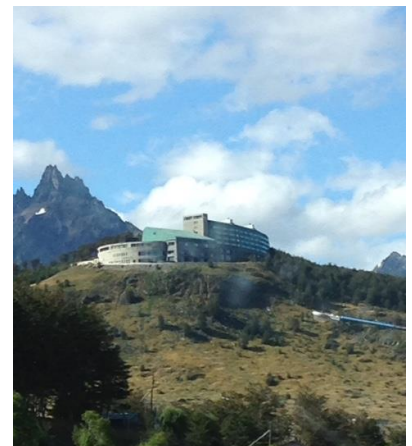
El Chaltan

- Classic Patagonia and Andes views everywhere with Fitz Roy being recognizable to the whole world.
- Sweet little village full of climbers
- Condors, guanaco (llama-like), and choique (ostrich-like)
- Explored and frequented by CEOs from Patagonia, North Face and Black Diamond
- The picture for El Chaltan is me underneath Fitz Roy and Cerro Torre Glaciers.



Ushuaia

- End of the World – but I prefer Bottom of the World or Gateway to Antarctica
- Home of Tierra del Fuego National Park, their Rt 66 called Rt 40 or Pan American Highway
- Surrounded by Andes and water with barely an opening for the Pacific on one side and the Atlantic on the other.
- Penguin Island, Sea lions island, THE Lighthouse
- A world class guide named Dani who lives in Ushuaia and took me into his family and friends' homes.
- The picture for Ushuaia is a 5-star recently opened high on a hill overlooking the town.





People and Guides

- The most-friendly people I can remember meeting. They love their country and want you to too.
- People are comfortably casual as is their usual dining and style of living.
- Guides are uniquely well-educated for many years and Wilderness Guide trained; serious guides available for a comfortable cost.
- All Argentine really want and need our American dollars.

Remoteness

- This is a huge area and driving from one town to another is often not logical. Even flights are long.
- Difficult to stay in communications. Next to NO English news. Internet slow and tedious like we used to deal with 'dial up'.
- Accommodations predominately like we had in the 60s.
- This really is the Bottom of the World – the southernmost city in the world.

Pros and cons

- It's summer while we are suffering snows.
- Time zone is nearly the same so no jet lag.
- Internet inaccessibility always plagued me once outside of Buenos Aires.
- Stories abound of unsafe streets in Buenos Aires but I never saw or felt it.
- It's a long ways away - nearly 24 hours door-to-door.

Friendly? Let's ALL drink mate!

I saw mate everywhere in Peru and Chile, and now in Argentina. The hotel receptionist would share her drink; the sports store owner would pour a bit more hot water into the mate cup and offer it. Folks carried their mate cup and thermos everywhere. Here's from NPR with more description: "Tea Tuesdays: Gift Of The Moon, Bane Of The Spanish — The Story Of Yerba Mate" by Jasmine Garsd

Legend has it the moon gifted this drink to the Guaraní people of South America. It was banned by the colonial government. The Jesuits made it their most profitable crop. Oh, and the pope drinks it.
www.npr.org/blogs/thesalt/2015/03/17/393355841/tea-tuesdays-south-america-runs-on-yerba-mate?sc=ipad?f=1008

Imagine!

One day later and I'd been snowed out and not able to come home for at least another day.

See more at <http://www.southpeoplepatagonia.com/en/> for my friend Dani's website.

Or his adventure race at <http://www.desafioushuaia.com/>

See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Douglas_Tompkins for the controversy of land grab vs saving Patagonia for parks. Looks like Nature Conservancy to me. Sounds like it to the locals too.



The bird preserve deserves being sought out and deserves its acclaimed reputation. Yet as I confessed, I do better as a City Girl and a Zoo Girl but I did especially enjoy seeing the flamingo flocks and when they took off the color was astounding and memorable. Even the bugs that ate me were memorable. The walk to and from gave me views of El Calafate that are not in the tourist brochures: horses in the yards, friendly dogs everywhere, and hippie homes and trailers intermixed with lovely homes.



The Glacier Museum is a long way out of town but now that I realize how special it is, and how it houses research and will include campuses of scientists, it makes more sense. It is worth much of a day trip and includes movies, a 3D film, and well done displays. Another day I went to Estancia Christina which included a boat trip past some massive icebergs. The one above was equal to a major high rise building and was the deepest blue. There is probably a boat in the picture but it's too small to be seen. The same can be said of the Upsala Glacier – a boat going up close would be too small to be seen.



There was a four wheel drive hairy if not spooky drive to the Canyon of Fossils followed by a hike up to a point to get still a different look of the Upsala Glacier – an overlook. The fossils were all underfoot and everywhere. The last picture here is another day and overlooking the P. Moreno Glacier where we saw at least four big calving's which echo through the valley. What you see would be as high as a high rise Manhattan building.



A drive of about 3 ½ hours takes one from El Calafate to the small and charming town of El Chaltan within view of the famous Fitz Roy Mountain as well as Cerro Torre. You will recognize the mountain range by the logo for the clothing maker called Patagonia. From my hotel window I'd open the window and see the Fitz Roy in golden glow. Later it would be white and silver. It was with us all the time within the four days of hiking. One hiking day went from desert to woods to forest to lake. Here you see the fungus type growth called something like breadfruit. The natives had no means of growing wheat for flour and these balls, though tasteless, served as their carbohydrates.



This is only one of many glaciers that would be in our view all day every day. The riverbed served as one day's picnic spot, as would one lake called Laguna Capri be another spot.



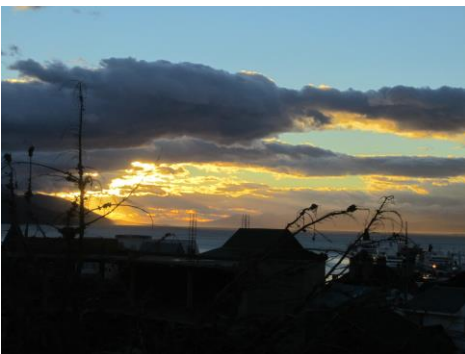
This is Capri Lake for its rock island in the middle. We had desert and woods and lakes surrounding the mountains and glaciers all day. See the peaks of Fitz Roy from my breakfast room window? Then onto Ushuaia and that breakfast room view of 360 degrees of Andes, mountains and water. Just hard to believe or imagine. Their mountains were not as ragged nor as recognizable as that of El Chaltan's Fitz Roy.



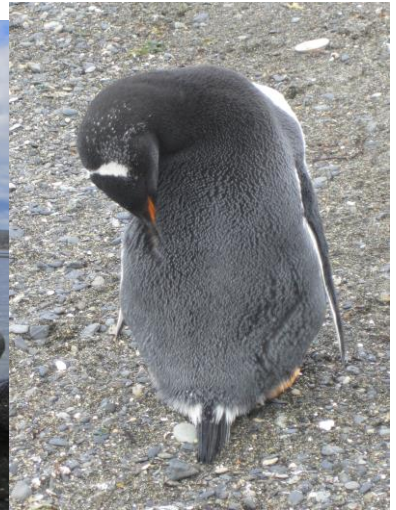
We are on a lake in the national park that is truly the end of the world. One side is Chile and one side is Argentina. I got my passport stamped. Here is Dani with his young guide in training Belin. I would later offer to cover some English classes for Belin. Speaking of newbies: these American sounding boys on the motorcycles were experiencing their very first day on a cycle. I listened to them learn how to turn the darned things on and off and remembered our friend Donna Lane who got a cycle and first day was off to take lessons when she had a head on collision and died on the spot in front of her husband. I held my breath two different mornings as these boys took off.



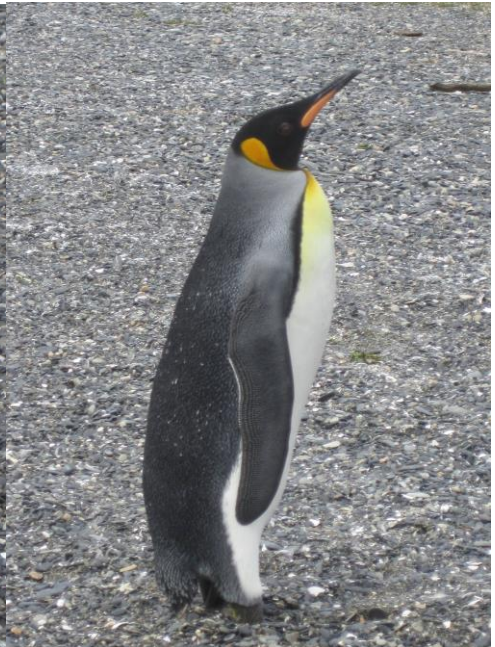
Dani is slowly building a new house and this is his view. All glass to take in the forever and ever views. He first had a cabin on the property which he added gas and another floor and now rents out. The logic when you live in a country with over 40% inflation and a peso that gets more and more worthless is to put every bit of money you can into assets like a house. He will have three. The last picture is his friend the pharmacist where I had dinner one night. It would be a lovely house in any country and was complete with a large garden.



Sunrises and sunsets from my hotel always held my attention. A breakfast and lounge with 360 degree view made sense. The middle picture was our long car ride to Estancia Haverton. On the way I'd see much of Dani's adventure race course scheduled for a couple days after I left. He has created and directs four different races and they are very professionally done. At the Estancia I'd get a zodiac boat out to Penguin Island. I needed help getting into and out of the zodiac but a few days after arriving home I was well again.



There were three types of penguins and they didn't seem to know to be hesitant about tourists under foot.



This big fat King Penguin looked like a beached whale and it was hard to imagine it would be able to stand upright, but like someone with great abs, when he was ready he just popped right up to his height of a bit over 1 meter. Very impressive!



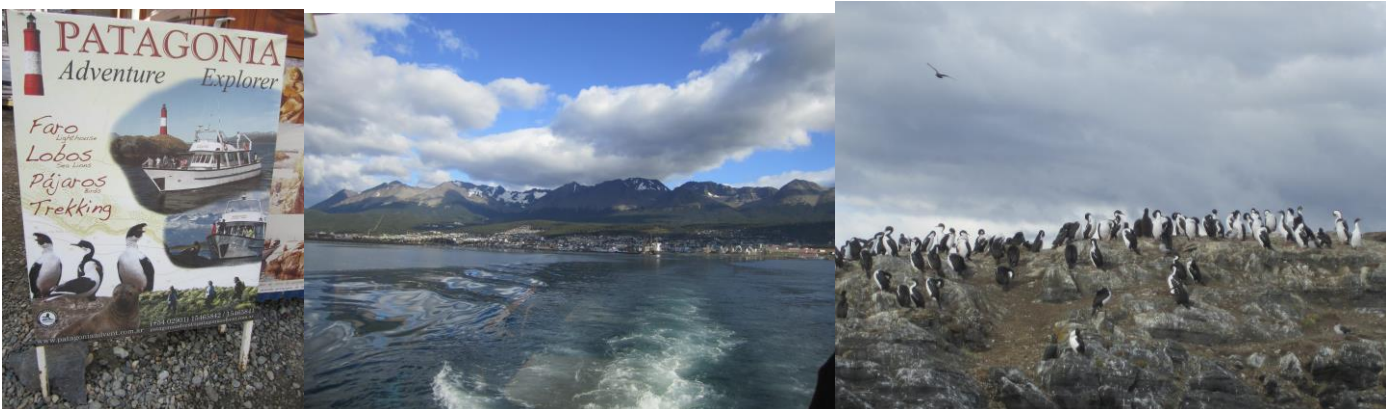
Our hike took us up a hill to their breeding grounds. Some breed within rocks, and these dig holes. Looks like love! (They do mate for life.) We watched one use the flipper feet to excavate a bunch of swirling dirt out of their big cubby hole and then the two of them splayed down into it. Together. Again, they didn't care that we were right within them.



A whale museum is known for the important research done in this unique area and a young marine biologist gave us a tour. The older woman is about 80 and from Ohio. She is the founder and said to be quite the character, both good and bad. I think to live in this outpost you have to be a bit of a character.



This windswept tree is known as a flag tree. I wonder why. Young Carola climbed into it while Dani fired up the butane stove and cooked us lunch and served wine too. His car as a wind barrier was a necessity. The tree would be where the bicyclists would turn around on his March 7th adventure race and it was so high up a dirt road that we knew they'd be calling Dani ugly names by the time they got there. See the little blue roofed house? It's a park ranger and there was no question when Dani asked if they could have their finish line on his grounds and use the facilities. Can you imagine in the US it would take a year to get permits!



A boat trip on the Beagle Channel and out to various islands to include a hike on another penguin island gave me another close up view of the border line between Chile and Argentina. It's no wonder its often in dispute – how can a water shed not change? That is Ushuaia in the background under the foothills of the Andes.



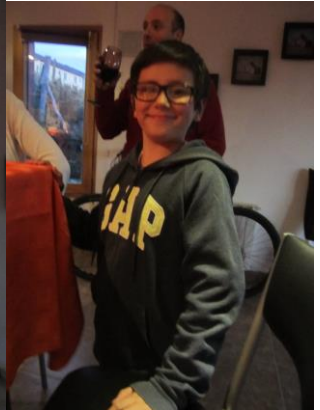
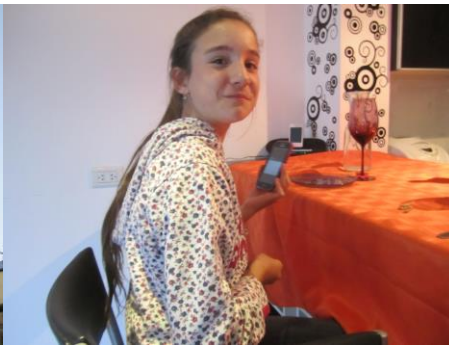
The bird islands were fine. We'd have the boat up so close that you were fairly sure you could just 'reach out and touch someone'. But when we came so near to the islands of the seals, it was a stomach turning event for the awful smell. (Those aren't just rocks – those are a few of a zillion seals.) I felt sorry for the guys on the sailboat. I was glad the treat of liquor came about pretty soon. We'd been drinking their mate tea and eating cookies which some of us needed to keep the stomach in control. That lighthouse is synonymous with Patagonia and the End of the World maybe made famous by the Jules Verne book who never even saw the area.



Our boat and before a hike up the hill where I took a 360 degree video showing the oddity that there seemed to be mountain ranges, Andes, and water everywhere with a hard time showing how one would get out to the Pacific on one side and the Atlantic on the other.



The little town of Ushuaia was started by a penal colony but with 70,000 inhabitants now, you couldn't tell it. Especially when you look up the hill to the 5-star hotel called Arakur with the massive copper roofs and forever swimming pools. We got a tour of the hotel since Dani knew them all from helping them locate their building spot and then later creating the series of trails. Even into the kitchen. That was after a hike farther up the hill for even more view of both the hotel, the water, and Andes.



It is so like the Argentine to give me a going-away party. It was my second visit to the original home of Elena and now shared by Dani while they build their own home. It too was a lovely informal affair with truly gourmet pizza as they always are informal yet elegant. Included in this house with a view in all directions is the family of Ignacio and Paula with their children Carola 13 and Juani 10, and of course Dani and Elena too. I couldn't have felt more warmly welcomed and included in their families.

Here is some swag from Dani's upcoming race which he gifted me: A BUFF, a serious medal, a gift bag for the medal, and a very classy high quality t-shirt. He really does his events professionally to include a helicopter friend who gives coverage and a photographer friend who creates videos – even from the helicopter.



Now – to find a way back to Patagonia!

Daily Notes

Day 1 - Demonstrations

I started with Demonstrations and you'll see that I ended with Demonstrations

I am in Buenos Aires but not without a little bit of challenge. The East Coast had another dump of snow but a neighbor helped dig us out, flights were greatly delayed, I had to sit in economy because the first class was sold out with paying passengers, I needed oxygen during the flight, and now we have major demonstrators very near to my hotel despite the torrential rain. Yet rest assured that despite 24 hours door to door I am very glad to be here and also pleased to have given myself an extra day before I start my trip to El Calafate in Patagonia.

My hotel is on the edge of the famous pedestrian street called Florida Avenue. Much of this area is slated to be all pedestrian and Florida Avenue has some European style elegant buildings. On the end of the Avenue is a huge park. If you walk through that park you get to the other hotel where I stayed in November. Both of these hotels have had wonderful concierge floors which gives me far too much food and drink.

The protests are for what is perceived as a corrupt government and their part in the possible suicide of a prosecutor one month ago. Article link follows and I saw some of what CNN is covering right now. There is said to have been a number of "suicided" people. Billboards have ticking clocks as to how many days until the populace can vote out their current leader. Will it ever be different? When you see the "mothers of the missing" who have been marching once a week for many, many years, you've got to wonder.

With inflation in the mid 40% and it said that much of the country's wealth is taken out of the country, probably something will have to happen. It is fortunately a very rich country and one that allows totally open immigration.

I heard that the government chases the illegal money exchange by using cocaine sniffing dogs. But not for cocaine but because most \$100 bills have touched cocaine. (The presence of people from Columbia is said to be large.)

One is very much incentivize not to use the official money exchange. It is at 8.5 pesos to \$1. In November I got 11, then on the street I just got 12.6, and I am told that good shopping will give you 15 pesos to the \$1.

Tomorrow morning I go to the little local airport and just hope that the controllers are not on strike like they were last time I was there. It cost me one full day of my hike but gave me one full extra day in Buenos Aires.

Not bad.

<http://m.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-31515822>

From USA Today – Ten Reasons Why Flying Coach is Better

You dressed nicely, but got rejected for an upgrade ... again. Well, dust off your shoulders, because you'd rather have that middle seat by the bathroom anyway. Here are a few things to love about coach, the stepchild of air travel:

1. Dwelling amongst the 99 percent means increased odds of someone having a peanut allergy in your row. That means you're first in line to get two packs instead of just one. What could possibly be better than double-peanut day except maybe triple-peanut day?

2. *Its an excuse to finally learn how to meditate and practice mindfulness.*
 3. *You can be right next to the bathroom, which is not only convenient but also provides the sound of repeated flushing that will remind you of the lulling sound of ocean waves.*
 4. *Isn't the fetal position cozy? Less legroom means you can effectively cram your knees against the seat back to let your body flop flaccidly against the window or over the tray table. Business class passengers don't enjoy such luxury — there's way too much floor space for that.*
 5. *The inability to recline means practicing perfect, upright posture. Now your aunt Gertie can finally get off your back about never sitting up straight.*
 6. *No pesky flight attendant will hassle you about drinking more of the free wine or champagne.*
 7. *The surprise open middle seat next to yours brings excitement and illusions of grandeur.*
 8. *Bringing a brown-bag meal lets you relive nostalgic childhood memories, especially if your neighbor is open to swapping sandwiches.*
 9. *Your laptop is so much bigger than the screens on the seat backs, and you can bring a better-than-first-class selection of pirated movies purchased on the street in Ecuador for less than a dollar.*
 10. *You felt so sorry leaving your dog at home that, after ear surgery, now dons one of those embarrassing plastic cones on its head. Now, you get to practice empathy by wearing a neck pillow.*
- And just think, between rounds of Jenga with empty coffee cream containers, you can easily bribe innocent children pacing down the aisles to massage that sore shoulder you've been leaning on. Oh, we're only kidding — you're too old for Jenga.*

The article missed one reason – you might get a lot of attention from the attendants and a long dose of oxygen if your body temporarily fails you.

Day 2 - Starting in Buenos Aires

The sun shines and all is well. My tummy is cooperating and I've no further need for oxygen.

Breakfast buffet reminds me of grocery shopping in a foreign country. It's something akin to trick-or-treating. Fun and you never know for sure what you're going to get.

Last night's buffet in concierge floor was excellent yet full of new delights. Instead of fried potatoes I think it was onion pieces in a crispy batter. It was perhaps as many calories as a Bloomin' Onion but who cares. A mixture of asparagus, red peppers, celery, etc. was a good side dish. Small dishes of tapas were offered. One was about three bites of their argentine beef in a thick red wine sauce. Maybe the Malbec's wine they served. Another was a thick cheese-filled pasta as a cross between joutsa and a half ravioli in a thick but clear creamy sauce of mushrooms pieces. Dark seeded bread sandwiches had numerous fillings with my favorite being an olive pate. The desserts are normally not as sweet as ours. Whatever the little pieces of crunchy pineapple-looking pieces are I have no idea but they were in a light vanilla pudding type sauce and I considered going back for more but stuck with the fresh fruits instead. Kiwi drinks.

After my airplane fiasco which the attendants blamed on my alcohol consumption on top of two Benadryl (the alcohol being within my norm but the Benadryl doubled with the hope I could sleep while in economy for 11 hours) I declined a second Malbec.

The hotel's concierge floor will be missed but I return in two weeks. Departing was interesting in that they let me pay in pesos so my room was even less money than my previously thought bargain. Yet they convinced me that I must only use their approved taxi service. Is it for my safety or so they get a portion of the take? (A fact of daily life in Argentina.). I really didn't care since the rate was only 120 pesos anyway. Less than \$10 U.S. I suspect the meter fee of 86 pesos was the taxi driver's portion.

There are some ways the Argentine are very civilized. They smile and are friendly. (Like the old days of Continental Air.) In the airports they check for weapons and bombs only. There is no care about liquids or coats or shoes when going through their domestic security. They even have jet ways unlike Frankfurt. They serve foods and wines even on short flights. I thought they had Wi-Fi but couldn't find it today.

Was this the same airport I called third world last time? A different terminal and less crowds for sure.

Yet their state run airline has seats unsuitable for anyone over about 5'8" or over about 150 pounds. The luggage bins would never hold what that of United does and thus most every piece of luggage is checked. (Fortunately my new TUMI was surprisingly allowed and fit). First class is oftentimes amusingly silly like those of Lufthansa domestic: same seats as economy with middle seats blocked with a table insert.

The Argentines are noted to be friendly, easy going and helpful. So far from my October 2012 trip and my November 2014 experiences it is a reputation well deserved. I hope if I ever have the theft I've heard about (don't wear jewelry in public) that one of them comes to my rescue.

It is a 3 1/2 hour flight. Big country. I'd arranged with the hotel for a driver which I like to do in strange places then I'll take a taxi later. El Calafate is a major resort but it's pretty primitive by our standards. Walking to Lake Argentina and the rough roads and sidewalks reminded me that this country had basically been bankrupt a couple times.

This is the few days of a big lake festival where I wandered part of the early evening. The noise and commotion travels many blocks and the music can be heard at my hotel. The rumble as one gets closer is a vibration too.

I should have changed more dollars in Buenos Aires. I had to shop a few places for 11.5 and then finally a 12 (pesos to the \$) but only after paying for my Estancia tour. The tour company could only give me 8.0. That's a measurable difference!

In the grocery store while acquiring my usual of milk and yogurt I found an Argentine Grappa. Hallelujah.

It turned dark around 10pm and stayed in the sunny 60s. Another hallelujah.

Maybe more tomorrow. Life is good.

Day 3 - El Calafate.

I might have walked all their streets by now and briefly looked in all their windows. It reminds me of early 90s when I visited Santiago, Puerto Mont, and Chiloe Island. Charming yet still in the 50s. There and here.

I lazed over breakfast and the news (news off the iPad since there is no English speaking channel) having slept in and getting ready for a big and long day tomorrow. By late morning my walking the streets had gotten me to Lake Argentina and the noted bird preserve. Bird watchers would love it.

Do you know the term "city girl"? I've previously coined the phrase "zoo girl" because it's confirmed that is ME. I figured this out early and as late as 2008 when I took a nature tour out of Jackson Hole. Binoculars and tripods and lots of lack of patience later I recognized in myself not only an attention-span deficit but also preferring to be a zoo girl. It's so much easier.

Then again in Alaska's Denali Park I took a long day bus tour in search of animal life. A waste on me except for the terrain which I very much enjoyed. It was another day, driving back from a white water rafting trip, that I saw the most and best wildlife: a huge moose running alongside of my bus.

So today there was certainly close-by wildlife but they apparently weren't bug eaters but rather blood suckers. Knats and Mosquitos always find me. I persisted for the two hour tour around the swamps on the edge of the lake. Yes there was an abundance of wildlife and the best was a flock of flamingos: When they take off it's a blaze of colors. Most of the large variety of birds didn't care that we were there and weren't spooked by hikers. I wish they'd been eating more bugs.

Then I'd planned to walk the 5km out of town to the Glaciarium. Glacier museum. I'll send a video. Out in the desert overlooking another part of the huge lake. (But why so far out is odd). Thank heavens the rains came then which was double lucky to have kept dry at the bug habitat. Oops -oh no - I mean the bird habitat. So I caught a shuttle and realized secondly how lucky I was since that was the longest 5km I've ever seen, it was all uphill, and only a highway with next to no shoulder and all that was loose gravel. Don't ever trust a cute little hotel receptionist for her distances.

The glacier museum was educationally wonderful. Many films and one feature was 3-D. I've walked on glaciers in Switzerland and Italy, at least. Was at the edge of ones in continental US and either walked on or near in Alaska's Kenai Peninsula and Denali. I've flown over them in a little sightseeing plane. I like best seeing them from a distance or on film. 3-D was perfect. One film was aerial views.

There was a glacier bar which was attracting the masses. I skipped it. Readily.

My day should end early as I have a very early rise tomorrow before heading to the real glaciers. I'm now at a little local mom and pop home-cooked restaurant and thought I'd really found the perfect spot (per the hotel - that cute little receptionist who doesn't know 5k from 10k) until drats but arrives a big table of Americans. Just by the time I have a little money to travel the rest of the world has more.

Lamb is a specialty in this region. Coming up - along with a side of vegetables and a glass of Malbec from Mendoza - my last November location before going to Northern Patagonia. Later report: no matter the intro of Americans to MY restaurant, I'll certainly return once again if not twice. All that, including a service and table charge, was 220 pesos. At official exchange rate that's \$27. At my street exchange rate it's \$18.30. Just lovely had it been European \$75. A thank you is due to the cute little hotel receptionist.

It's a wonder that "dog" isn't a specialty here. There might be more dogs than residents. Big dogs. Happy and well fed dogs. I've not seen a beggar person yet but many dogs who ask but only once then they leave you alone. They don't look hungry just inquisitive.

Speaking of dogs, smile, my hotel is fine but there is always a tour bus coming or going. I cringe at the peoples, at their itinerary, at their giant world tour suitcases, and even just at the thought of one night stands. In Buenos Aires I chatted with two couples who were just in from a very long Holland America cruise. I've been there (15 days Hawaiian Islands) and thus I wasn't surprised to hear them declare all the cities they'd visited; but could they remember anything their quickie fly-over showed them? Guess! Also guess the size of most all of them.

Don't be jealous. In addition to wildlife and morning sun and roses everywhere, it's been raining since about 2pm.

A lot of this area really is stuck in the 50s or 60s. Perfect place for the old hippies. But hippies were slim? Only the sexy looking young boy hikers in the grocery store were slim and I suspect they will be suspect in due course too if they are American.

On that - good night.

Info and pictures about El Calafate

http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Calafate

Day 4 How time flies when you're having fun....

But it never flies at night when I have to get up early and can't sleep. 5am is ugly early in my book. And until about 9am of the new day it was looking like an ugly day so fogged in as to see nothing. A drive to the port felt disappointing yet I knew there would be something good even if we couldn't see the mountains. Boarding the boat felt mysterious as in "where are we? What's out there?" Soon we were seeing snow-capped Andes peeking out above and the icebergs we negotiated around made seeing a distance unnecessary anyway.

The icebergs were an unexpected surprise. They were crystals. Some were blue. Some were mineralized to be almost coated in black. They were little sculptures and they were Wall Street multifaceted buildings. Since it remained hazy through half of our cruise I felt obliged to purchase the pictures made by our onboard photographer. See? There's more than one way to skin a cat, so to speak. Traveling alone would generally mean I'd have no pictures of myself and yet I travel enough that everyone is probably tired of seeing me.

It was expected to be and was a very long day and when I got in at nearly 9pm Tom was worried. About my absence and about what he perceived as an exhausted Marie who he wanted to help. I figured a kid who qualified for a Stanford summer program could probably work it all out. It's sweet to hear Tom being such a softie.

So since I had no chance to write notes last night and then slept thru my alarm this morning, here are notes of the day from a brochure:

Estancia Cristina and Upsala Glacier. This morning, an early drive (approximately 7:15 a.m. departure from the hotel) takes you to Puerto Bandera to board the boat to Estancia Cristina. The 8:15 a.m. boat navigates the blue glacial waters of Lago Argentino, passing massive icebergs and offering striking views of the western front of Upsala Glacier ahead. One of the largest glaciers in South America, Upsala Glacier measures a stunning 6.2 miles wide and over 31 miles long! You continue on Cristina Channel for an afternoon at Estancia Cristina, in one of the most fascinating and remote Patagonian valleys. After a three-hour cruise, you reach the remote and historic Estancia, where guests joining the shorter (30-60 minute) trek option will enjoy a picnic lunch, a guided walk highlighting the ranch's impressive history and explaining the sheep and wool tradition in Patagonia, and a visit to a small museum, which holds many original pieces related to ranch life and work.

You will travel via 4x4 vehicle to the Upsala Glacier for a once-in-a-lifetime experience—exploring the valley in the way gauchos and pioneers did. Guests seeking a challenging trek (5 hours total) continue via 4x4/jeep and, from a panoramic view of Upsala Glacier, begin a hiking excursion to the Canyon of the Fossils, named for the abundant fossils in the area. (Both groups were at the fossil canyon). Upon returning to the main house, both groups depart by boat at 5:30 p.m. to navigate back to the mainland, reaching the lodge at approximately 7:45 p.m.

Me again. As I mentioned, it was 8:45pm return. No dinner and most of you know I die without food.

I'd chosen the lunch option having been told it was a huge meal, glorious and of the local and unique lamb of the region. It was also pricey but I gambled knowing I hate searching out food and that I had plenty of hiking coming up.

Started with a large basket of homemade breads and biscuits with topping selections such as olive spread. Wines of choice so of course it called for a Malbec from Mendoza where I visited in November last.

Two big empanadas came next: one stuffed with shredded lamb and the other with a sweet corn mixture.

The lamb dish was enough for a family and I did my best. Added were a selection of big stacked slices of local vegetables to include a sweet potato, the purple Peruvian potato, and an unidentified root vegetable and topped with a bulbous looking bright green squash something akin to a fat stunted zucchini. I ate mine and those of others at the table.

We ended with small treats, a big caramel flan cut pie shaped and artistically decorated with a dollop each of their thick caramel and a rich thick whipped cream, crested with a crisp spun sugar "cookie".

Now - do my foodie friends enjoy my notes better?

I was blessed with meeting Vanessa and Jason from Toronto and spent much of the day in their company. She is a real gutty gal in her 7th month of pregnancy. He is a Coldwell Banker commercial real estate broker. She runs her own company and grew up traveling with an airline family.

All in all a most enjoyable and unique day and with all the calls, email and worry later meant I slept thru my alarm. Good thing I gave myself extra days here.

Tomorrow guide Cecilia picks me up for three night stay in El Chaltan.

Day 5 - last full day in El Calafate and into El Chaltan for Day 6

A lazy start for day 5: I remembered how to darn a sock. Did laundry in the bidet. What else is it good for? I like the spa comfort of a shower though I realize the illogic of that.

It was 55 degrees at noon. Perfect. As was yesterday which is very rare at the glaciers. I'd taken a velour (they are called 'teddy bear' here) plus a rain coat and needed little extra but thankfully I wore hiking shoes. It was foggy at first and poured rain on half of the boat ride home.

Wow. I'd heard that taxes and imports were wildly priced. At a downtown sports store I found my recent (with a big coupon discount) Patagonia jacket at 6250 pesos or \$725 legal exchange rate.

Since I missed breakfast having slept thru my alarm, I indulged in a big mid-day meal. I'd also missed dinner last night but took in plenty of calories no matter. I carry plenty of food in my suitcase.

Couldn't find an afternoon El Calafate tour. That's ok. Can't do everything and I've walked all the streets and poked into many stores. Been to local restaurants and walked lakeside. Walked the tourist Main Street multiple times and the local Main Street too. Went up the hill and saw local parks, their school and hospital. One is barely off Main Street until the streets become gravel.

Best of all to my lazy day, I stayed well and rested. The afternoon sunshine took me to the lake festival where plenty more were also enjoying the rehearsals. I can open my hotel window and hear the music.

Two nights ago the restaurant was perfect. I'd eat there every night but I came back too late after my tour yesterday and today they are closed.

So the little sweet hotel receptionist redeemed herself for putting two toddlers next door to me by recommending still another place. Isabel's is a hostel upstairs; a restaurant downstairs and also importantly it had good internet. But then everything would be good compared to my hotels ancient dial up type of system.

They specialize in these huge deep skillet of family food. Lamb pieces, vegetables, sauce, with thick French fries on top. The Canadians have poutine. This is bigger. With a glass of Malbec red and a huge loaf of bread it was fine and a good find. A main dish/pot is between 160 and 200 pesos. Wine about 60. (Divide by 8.5 or 12). When the table next to me left a half bottle of white wine I helped myself to another glass. A real lush I've become! Was the restaurant perfect? Oops. Not only American kids are brats. Is the whole world breeding juvenile delinquents? This big pan dish begets the families. They did have good Wi-Fi which I returned to later in the day.

I've finished another Florentine historical novel (Birth of Venus) and wanting to return to Florence. At least in books. I am now into Touching the Void about disaster climbing in the Andes. At least I've returned to more present day but as soon as I have 20th century internet I'm returning again to the 1400s with another book about the artsy world of Tuscany.

For Monday morning or day 6 tour guide and friend of Dani Cecilia picked me up in her car for a drive to Perito Moreno glacier. This is one of the areas tourist highlights. One can walk on it, get right up close, or just be a tourist and see it from the "balconies" which are a series of steps and walkways. It is massive and it is very active in so far as we saw two major calving and three smaller ones. It bears more description but I'm tired of slow internet and finger typing. Later.

The drive to El Chaltan is 3 to 3 1/2 hours but full of interest going from desert to forest and back and with the multitude of interesting facts from Cecilia.

The town is tiny and only recently got its first bank. Residents used to have to drive the 3-4 hours for banking. I saw lines of cars to get gas and in El Calafate due to the tourist season there were blocks of line ups to get gas. Cecilia carries extra containers of gas.

My little B&B is lovely, quaint but modern, and only contains four rooms. The hotel prices are shockingly cheap with unheard of prices for us. That is, if paid in pesos using black market exchange rates.

I'll try to get into the conversion stories another time and what a local must do to travel. Of big interest is that Cecilia used to travel converting 1 peso to \$1 and now it's 8.5.

I also want to explain how and why El Chaltan was developed thirty years ago. Border control and giving away land lots for those who would go and stay. More later.

Now I need dinner and an early to bed so I can manage a big hike tomorrow. Bigger if the rain and fog would go away which it's supposed to do.

Day 7 - The first full day in El Chaltan

I was very pleased with my legs and feet holding up today because they've been neglected and I wondered if I deserved them performing without complaint. So far so good but tomorrow might be the day tiredness sets in. I hope not since we have a similar schedule.

After a breakfast of eggs, cheese, ham, fresh fruits, homemade yogurt, cereals and freshly made bread I was ready to go at 9am. I'd looked out my window at 7am to see Fitz Roy Mountain golden yellow out my window. Later it would appear glisseny silver. Glaciers all around. When we arrived last night it was all fogged in.

My tour guides name is Cecilia and she is 38 years old, lovely and with well-bred presence about her, a certified mountain guide, a full time math teacher soon to go on special projects, and an oftentimes guide and lecturer for National Geographic and Mountain Travel Sobek. She was a physics major in school during her time in Buenos Aires intending to go into medicine but when she immigrated to this tiny town there wasn't much need for physics so she added an education degree.

The government gave away small plots of land in the newly developed El Chaltan in return for full residency. They deserved large plots since she chopped wood for fuel and when electricity came it was only for a few hours a day. Only this last June did cell service come to town and internet just barely has. It's a satellite and about like dial up. I can't download or send much of anything. The town was likely only established to create a demarcation line with Chile as that was only 30 years ago.

El Chaltan just got their first bank and now they don't have to drive the 3 1/2 hours to El Calafate. Cecilia loves the town and knows everybody in town. Which isn't difficult since you can walk from one end to the other in 15-20 minutes.

Our hike was not as planned since we suddenly got unusually nice, rare and clear weather. There is a peak overlook that needs clear and low wind and apparently rarely happens. But was I ok with 2600 feet of elevation gain, some scree, and 12-13 miles? I wanted to try and we did and it was amazing and it took until 6pm. Cello Torre and Fitz Roy Mountains are famous for climbing and are well known symbols of Patagonia. It was the clothing company Patagonia logo and still the outline.

I'd finished the book about an accident by climbers in the Andes called "Into the Void" which was slower reading for me not knowing so many of the terms and equipment. Cecilia, being well established in the climbing community, (that's much of what this town is about) answered many questions. I'd had a touch of info from hiking guide and friend Nola but needed more and she wasn't here. Cecilia later took me to the visitor center where they had demo outfits and equipment so it's clearer now. So says the blind man.

As an aside, somebody just told me that a travel program suggested that Patagonia wasn't worthy of coming to. Odd. I have been to Argentina in October 2013, in Northern Patagonia in November 2014, now, and I was working on hatching a way to return. I'm coming this way next month to Santiago Chile. And I'm no travel slouch. Different strokes for different folks. I'd later learn that it is the favorite destination of the CEOs of Patagonia. North Face and Black Diamond and they make huge efforts to purchase large plots of land and then donate them to the parks system.

Oops. Electricity went out. I'd sure hate to have been up on the hilltop lookout now. The trail WAS lit. Now it's black out like the stargazers like. So the hotel brought me a big long light of about 24" that lights the room and runs on rechargeable batteries. We will see if their part of the house that's now operable has the Wi-Fi. Such that it is.

I've run out of books so I might be relegated to finishing the downloaded "The Prince" by Machiavelli. Or if the lights battery runs out I might catch up on sleep.

Decisions.

From Nola: *That's awesome that you got to see Fitz Roy so clearly. I've had a climber friend who said he had to wait over a month to have decent weather down there... There is a movie called "180 degrees south" and is a quest to South America climbing & also features Yvon Chouinard, founder of Patagonia and Black Diamond. You might find it interesting. I'm inspired to see it again.*

Day 8 - last full day in El Chaltan and into Ushuaia for Day 9

Yet maybe this won't be my last day here. I'm working on hatching a plan to see it all plus more next year. I don't expect it will stay the same because any city with this much growth in 30 years and with so much to offer is going to boom. Maybe I can spend a few days in the lakes region of Bariloche and a few more days in El Chaltan. Unless something big and irresistible comes my way I'll return.

Dichotomy - When Beverly commented: "What a dichotomy of desert- like terrain and solid ice! Must be awesome." I had no idea how more dichotomy would be exposed still yet.

The trail - We started at 9am with a ride to the trailhead (all dirt and gravel road) since we were doing a point to point. I started seeing a river to one side and a forest to the other side and darned if we didn't spend most of the 11-12 miles by the side of a rushing stream and inside a forest. Is this really desert? Only about 800 feet up but rolling hills. Then 1200 feet down and that too rolling. There was an optional peak to climb which I'd have liked but not the scree coming down.

Imagine - With still different glaciers and the opposite side of Fitz Roy in view all day.

Then just as I thought I couldn't be more surprised, along came "Capri Beach" - a huge lake with a sandy beach and a rocky island in the middle. Thus Capri.

In between we saw what we first thought were three para-sailors but turned into two para-sailors and one condor. The condor size pretty much matched.

I learned more about the noted climber Bean Bowers who tackled new routes on Cerro Torre and got quite famous in Patagonia before stunning the world with cancer which he succumbed to six months later at age 39. He had a house for ten years in El Chaltan and his wife still visits. Then go much farther back in history and I bought "South: the story of Shackleton's last expedition 1914-1917" and got a ways into it already.

But back to Fitz Roy. It's out my window. It's everywhere. And depending on what side you're on, the view includes all these different glaciers and peaks. I got a James McPhee type description on how the ranges were formed. (Cecilia lectures for the National Geographic groups) I have some notes but my fingers are cramped from typing and emails aren't going thru anyway. This is almost the bottom of the world after all and tomorrow I'm really going to be exactly there. Time to send my videos I hope. Time to FaceTime with Tom I hope. (Nothing worked.)

Dogs - They are everywhere and not little fluffy things either but more German Shepherds than anything. They must need them to keep warm? Cecilia's dog has numerous additional homes which is a good thing since she is gone so much. Dogs are well behaved and don't run after cars or people and I guess the landmass is great enough that I didn't see poop.

Houses - I was invited into Cecilia's home and learned that her property has increased in value about 500 percent. She deserves it for all the wood chopping and lack of electricity in early days. I'd bet that

the value keeps increasing just as fast. She and ex-husband Diego fortunately had two plots so they happily live within a couple blocks of each other.

Houses are commonly out of what looks like a corrugated aluminum but I later learned was tin which insulates and holds up well. Some houses are smaller than a hotel room. Many are used seasonally. I saw some nice little shops but the owners live out back in a tiny trailer. This is almost the Wild West. Cecilia has added on a couple bedrooms and second bath for all the visitors.

Tax advantages - They created El Chaltan for border purposes and there is a similar story for Ushuaia. There also exists free taxes on some large items such as cars. For at least one of these there may have been political reasons as well. Of course, as this is Argentina!

Airport - I'm on my way from El Calafate to Ushuaia by air of course. It used to be a five hour drive from El Chaltan to El Calafate for Cecilia before they paved the road. Now it's more like three hours but she drives carefully at about 70 mph as much due to all the bikers along the road and the guanaco (llama type) that are prone to jump the cattle fences into the road. There really isn't a controlled speed limit and some cars zoomed past. I saw herds of Guanaco and small flock of baby ostrich type bird.

Before El Chaltan got their first and only fuel station (a small trailer) they had to carry gas cans. That was only fairly recently and lines still appear to be the norm.

The airport is new, modern and convenient. Jet-ways and a close up view of the lake and mountains. Security is much more relaxed and liquids of all sizes allowed. It is surprisingly full of armed guards roaming the areas.

Cecilia will be doing her grocery shopping, banking, fueling, car repair and miscellaneous errands as well as meeting up with Diego (her ex) to help him with car repair. He is on his way to Antarctica to guide. As we pulled up to the airport a big bus was unloading and she identified it as a National Geographic tour group that she normally does but which would have required a lot more patience and energy than guiding me. A good choice. Smile.

I was really miffed that I had to check my luggage. Anything over 5 kilos can't go onboard so I couldn't even remove my coats to pass muster. When I realized they board starting at the back I was slightly glad to have no luggage.

School kids - I've been so disappointed and worried that our American kids are getting lazy, fat, too much into their devices, undisciplined and generally disappointing. What's going to happen to our country? It didn't make me feel any better to learn that the Argentine say the same things about their kids.

Dani - He arranged to meet me at the airport and then give me a walking tour of the town and I'm almost sorry that I didn't realize his race is next weekend or I would have declined his offer. He created and manages four races a year and they sound very professional. I saw videos and know he even has helicopter coverage.



The picture is Dani and his race staff. Dani is second from right.

Later. We had a town walking tour and some visiting time in an old coffee shop. It was as much like a museum as a coffee and pastry shop but it has a very good French pastry chef so I indulged. It was one of the first buildings in town and a General Store.

Coming up is dinner at Elena and Dani's home.



Photos from Dani's adventure race.

Day 10 and 11

Day 10 was my first day in the bottom of the world. The t-shirts say it is the world's end. End seems too harsh but I was prone to agree due to the brutal wind. At the airport I thought the wind was going to pick me up off my feet. Dani not only was there to give me a ride but he held onto me too.

Thank heavens after so much simple accommodations my new room is lovely for any country and especially for here. It is an apartment with a small kitchen, living area, desk area and separate bedroom. It's modern in all aspects except the sewers apparently are direct. To keep the smell at bay I cover up all drain holes.

The top floor breakfast and lounge area gives a 360 degree view of mountains and water both of which seem to be everywhere with only a very small break in the mountains. It seemed curious to me where the entry to the Atlantic and to the Pacific would be since the mountains didn't have a break to be seen.

I had a walking tour of the town and was stunned at how large. About 70,000 live here and mostly all along the water or within view. It's a big mixture and with seemingly no effort at building control.

One original and over 100 year old building on the main water street had been retained as a coffee and pastry shop complete with a French pastry chef. A friend of Dani's but I'd soon learn the whole town was his friend. He's been here nearly 20 years and he's 38-39 now so much of his life. We had coffee, pastries and wine.

Dani had arranged for me to dine at his home and meet his talented and lovely wife Elena. Elena has excellent English from school but was shy about using it. At first. She teaches a silk trapeze art in a gymnasium that I'd see in due course.

Our main dinner was excellent empanadas which turned out to be the norm throughout my stay. Finger food among friends in a casual atmosphere. I'm sold!

The house is much glass on two levels which takes in the bay and mountain views. The new house they are building also had walls of glass for the views.

The day was comprised of three separate hikes of 1 1/2 to 2 hours each. I'd been on famous route 40 on earlier days and hadn't thought how it was the same as the Pan American Highway. Like our Route 66. At the very end are hiking trails and views. We would be surrounded by and within both new and old forest woods all day and always water and more water. In the Tierra Del Fuego Park we would see a huge freshwater lake where we picnicked high on a rock cliff and could look across to Chile.

Our last hike of the day was in still a different area and I got a unique glacier passport stamp installed next to mine from the border at our Glacier National park. We were at the edge of Chile whereas in Glacier National Park we were on the edge of Canada.

I'd talked marathons as much because Dani creates and directs four adventure races. March 7 happens quickly. I was invited and continued my day touring with Dani to a huge modern Shopping Mall to pick up race items, to where Elena teaches "silk trapeze" gymnastics (think Cirque du Soleil), downtown sport shop to pick up items from his main sponsor, by the new house he is building and now storing race items, his original cabin and finally to some friends home in a lovely area of modern and large homes.

This friend owns a series of pharmacies and is one of the adventure racers. He has a big garden and proudly showed me his greenhouses and all the bicycles he repairs and donates. His wife retired as a scientist to have babies and take up art work, ceramics and kiln work. Just lovely people.

While stepping out of the greenhouse and down a very long step I slipped and immediately realized my back was in trouble. I didn't say anything but sat quickly and dosed with Motrin. I was miserable through the evening, night and all the next day then amazingly got hugely better.

Drinks, easy snacks, translated conversations later then the momma Paula and two young teens Corola 13 and Juani 10 came home. I reluctantly stayed on for more drinks and dinner. Elena joined us. It all turned out very fortunate and pleasant for me, minus the back trouble which made it hard to focus. And when there's a couple different languages one really has to focus.

New drink: 3 parts Port; parts chocolate (wine?), 1 part Cognac. For dipping, beat egg yolk with cinnamon on a plate then dip the Glass with sugar on rim. I've no idea what it's called or what the chocolate wine type drink is.

We weren't home until nearly 11pm and I had no choice but to wash hair and some clothing but I was miserable and found it very difficult to even move let alone get around. The next morning at 5:30am alarm I was quite crippled and moved cautiously and often thought I'd pass out and stayed nauseous with the discomfort. I wasn't any optimistic that I'd be able to keep going, but I did and it all eased up.

We were off with the young teen Carola from the family to Estancia Haverard. The drive took us by ski areas and more amazing Andes Mountains and within them on the March 7 race course. Maybe 1 1/2 hour drive and we were in time for the zodiac boat out to Penguin Island. To do this I had to swallow my pride and get help into and out of the zodiac, and take plenty of Motrin.

I'd like to tell about the three species of penguins and their breeding but my fingers are cramped and it's late. All very unique and special with these unafraid birds within reach. We had a guided and educational tour and then another assist into the boat before getting a tour through the whale museum.

Dani had a windswept tree high on a hill where his adventure racers would do a turnaround and where today he set up a table and tablecloth and proceeded to cook a picnic and serve wine and desserts. All before continuing a course tour into a wee fishing village and conferring with park rangers.

We stopped for coffees and Calafate berry liquor at a restaurant complex owned by more friends and where Dani got married. Carola had been at the wedding party of 80.

It was a long drive and I cringed at getting in and out of the car and could see my life changing before my eyes. But as usual, most of what we worry about never comes to pass and after a rest I decided that I was healing quickly and well and that maybe the next day's hike might happen. But first it's to a Beagle Channel half day boat tour to include a hike.

I want to talk about the cruise ships. The 5-star hotel up on the hill. The political situations. The kids schooling. Their nanny and their momma. Art and science. My plans for next year. Etc. but it's off to bed and reading more of Sir Ernest Shackleton's adventure.

No proofing. As if I think you read it all anyway!

On that I say goodnight from Southern Patagonia and give you the last sunset/sunrise of Ushuaia for me for at least a year.



Last day – I started my trip in a massive demonstration and ended my trip with a demonstration! This is Buenos Aires!

It is a good thing my flight is not this morning or I probably wouldn't get there. I have a Birdseye view of a demonstration going on causing probably miles of backup of buses and trucks out my window. I can't find any news as to what it is but I see the people, hear them chanting, hear the drummers, and all that despite the heavy rain coming down. There is a big banner across the street keeping traffic at a stand till but I can't read what it says. I read this morning that more than half the schools were closed for teachers strike so it could be that. This should not endear the hearts of the population to the teachers.

I was told that there is actually an Internet app for alerting drivers to where the demonstrations go on. So this is not unique it is just close up for me.

Lots of noise and lots of horn honking and I really feel for all those people stuck in the taxis with the meters running.

This is Buenos Aires!

From USA Today – Ten Reasons Why Being on the Road Makes You So Happy

Feeling overwhelmed because the boss wants you to meet with delegates in Beijing yet again? Cheer up, Debbie Downer. When it comes to travel, you should always think on the bright side. Never underestimate the

power of an expense account: flying business class, binge eating all the Funyuns in the hotel mini bar, and getting a chauffeur at the airport. Better yet, while you may long for just one night in your bed at home, there are ways that life on the road makes you happier. Your boss' credit card is just a bonus.

You become the most interesting person in the room

That old, smug Dos Equis character who claims to be the most interesting man in the world has nothing on you. The more you travel, the more fruitful your log of far-flung stories becomes. Travel not only makes you more interesting, but also improves your odds of finding something in common with that person you want to be connected with at a networking event. It might just be they have a vacation home in Biarritz near your favorite golf course. It's irrelevant if you were getting paid as a caddy because you were backpacking at the time.

It gives fresh perspective and new ideas

Changing locations is an abundant source of new ideas and inspirations, and can often help you change your see things in a new light. This shift in perspective might even overflow into how you view your life. So, something that once happened to you can become something that happened for you, or whatever it is yogis say.

It's a source of meaningful connection

Traveling frequently on your own means endless opportunities to meet new people. The woman from Dallas sitting next to you on the plane could potentially be your future client. The other solo executive in the dining room? Your new partner. Plus, when we connect, especially with like-minded people, it fulfills our highest need: a sense of belonging.

"We are hardwired to connect with others, it's what gives purpose and meaning to our lives, and without it there is suffering," says author Brené Brown, an expert on the psychology of belonging.

It gives you something to look forward to

Anticipation is half the excitement, especially when it comes to your next adventure. Just think, while all those other employees are trapped inside cubicles, saving up for their two weeks of independence far in the future, you are free to roam, tomorrow. When you do end up back in the office, you know it won't be long until your next trip, business or otherwise.

Opportunity arises to learn something new

Making sushi in Japan? Oil painting in France? Psychologist Mihály Csíkszentmihályi found that learning contributes to happiness because it puts you into the mental state of flow, or energized focus and enjoyment in the process of the activity. Plus, bringing home a new skill is just a continuation of your travels, which you can happily share with others.

Its proof you can deal with uncertainty

So you're torn between relocating for work or sticking it out with the comforts — and albeit boredom — of home? Remember: a sense of accomplishment is euphoric, especially when the stakes are high. Traveling means you'll face many circumstances beyond your control, but challenge builds grit. The things you once thought were challenging pale in comparison to climbing Mount Kilimanjaro at night with a broken headlamp.

It makes you appreciate family

If you are worried about missing family back home, just remember that Roger de Bussy-Rabutin adage, "wind is to fire what absence is to love; it extinguishes the small, inflames the great." Time away from family means you will appreciate them even more when you return. Even weird Uncle Ned who holds eye contact just a little too long.

It teaches you gratitude

Haven't you been reading all those studies lately about the power of gratitude? Well, little will make you feel more gratitude than traveling. After spending a week in Kuala Lumpur during monsoon season, you'll never again take your laundry machine and dryer for granted. Ok fine, you'll probably start being ungrateful again, but exposure to suffering means that, at least for period of time, you'll get to flex your empathy muscles.

Being in transit means more “me” time

It might seem contradictory to feel alone when surrounded by people, but traversing an environment where nobody knows you can feel like “alone time.” I mean, how else are you going to refresh your dwindling log of selfies? Spending time alone will help you forget about unimportant things, forgive, and clear your boss’s demands from your brain.

Exposure to happy people is influential

Traveling to places like Denmark, Bhutan, and Fiji, where residents are reputed as happier than those of other parts of the world could also have an impact on your well-being. Speaker Jim Rohn said you are the aggregate of the five people you spend most of your time with. So why not leave all those cranky-pants employees around the water cooler and trade up for people who elevate your mood just by being around them?

Itinerary

Tue Feb 17

4:30pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#1400
7:26pm Arrive Houston IAH for plane change

9:00pm Depart Houston IAH via UA#819

Wed Feb 18

10:30am Arrive Buenos Aires EZE

Car service Blacklane

Hotel Sheraton Liberator in Buenos Aires – 1 night
Avenida Cordoba 690, Buenos Aires, 1054 Argentina Tele 54 11 4321 0000

Thu Feb 19 – Day 2 Buenos Aires to El Calafate

11:15am Depart Buenos Aires AEP local airport via Aerolinas Argentina #1876
2:35pm Arrive El Calafate FTE

Transfer to hotel via car arranged by hotel

Afternoon open – pay for Saturday Estancia trip; visit tour office; walk to Laguna Nimez bird preserve

Hotel Hotel El Quijote – 4 nights
Gobernador Gregores 1191, El Calafate, Patagonia Tel.: 54 2902 491017
info@quijotehotel.com.ar <http://www.quijotehotel.com.ar/ingles/quienessomos.html>

Quijote Hotel has an exceptional location in the heart of El Calafate. Decorated in the style of an old ranch, offers guests the quality of a modern fully equipped hotel in its 119 rooms.

Third National Festival of the Lakes is from 14-23 February in El Calafate. Music from national and international playing from 5:30pm to 1:30am.

<http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=es&u=http://www.tiemposur.com.ar/nota/77372-la-princesita-se-suma-a-la-fiesta-del-lago-2015&prev=search>

Fri Feb 20 – Day 3

El Calafate Hike in El Calafate on bird reserve; see Glaciarium Museum and Ice Bar

Sat Feb 21 – Day 4

El Calafate Estancia Cristina, navigation and hike
www.estanciacruzina.com – discovery tour

Sun Feb 22 – Day 5

El Calafate Day is open – look at other tours upon arrival

Mon Feb 23 – Day 6 to El Calafate to El Chalten

10:00am Depart El Calafate – guide Cecilia Costa to pick up and drive to El Chalten
Arrive El Chalten

Hike on Balconies of Perito Moreno Glacier and transfer to El Chalten.

Hotel Kaulen Hostaria – 3 nights

Antonio Rojo y Comandante Arrua, el Chalten (9301) - Santa Cruz
Tel: 54 02962-493251 info@kaulem.com.ar <http://kaulem.com.ar>

Tue Feb 24 – Day 7

El Chalten Hike to Cerro Torre Mountain with Guide and box lunch

Wed Feb 25 – Day 8

El Chalten Hike to Fitz Roy Mountain with Guide and box lunch

Thu Feb 26 – Day 9 El Chalten to El Calafate for flight to Ushuaia

Transfer to El Calafate about 2 hours for flight to Ushuaia

1:50pm Depart El Calafate FTE via Aerolineas Argentina #1828
3:05pm Arrive Ushuaia USH

Welcome city hike and dinner with Dani and wife Elena

Hotel Alto Andino Apartments – 4 nights
Gobernador Paz 868 (9410) Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, Patagonia
Tel 54 02901 430920 info@altoandinohotel.com 360' view to Channel and Andes range
www.altoandinohotel.com/ushuaia/suites-aparts.html

Fri Feb 27 – Day 10

Ushuaia Trekking national park with guide and box lunch – hike on coast trail

Sat Feb 28 – Day 11

Ushuaia Estancia day and boat trip to Penguin Island with guide – box lunch included
Drive 2 hours to Estancia Harberton and Zodiac boat to hike on Penguin Island

Sun Mar 1 – Day 12

Ushuaia Hike to the Balconies and navigation on the Beagle Chanel Half Day with guide and half day in a boat – 2 hours hike, lunch in Ushuaia and 3 hour boat trip on the Beagle Chanel

Mon Mar 2 – Day 13 – Ushuaia to Buenos Aires

10:05am Depart Ushuaia USH via Aerolineas Argentina #1879
1:33pm Arrive Buenos Aires AEP local airport

Taxi from local airport to hotel

Hotel Sheraton Liberator – 1 night
Address and phone above on Feb 18

Try to see a more authentic tango show. Saw Café Tortino, Carlos Gardel and Café de los Angelitos

Tue Mar 3

10:05pm Depart Buenos Aires EZE via UA#818

Wed Mar 4

5:40am Arrive Houston IAH for plane change

8:10am Depart Houston IAH via UA#220
12:32pm Arrive Newark EWR

From CW catalog: The stunning beauty of Southern Patagonia is extraordinary, and El Calafate, your base for this adventure, is no exception. Situated in the middle of the Patagonian Steppe, this area is best known for its outlying attractions; the Perito Moreno Glacier and Parque Nacional Los Glaciares (a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve). This trip provides an unbeatable introduction to this fascinating locale, complete with a visit to the unforgettable Perito Moreno Glacier. El Calafate owes its name to a small bush which produces a delicious berry. According to tradition, whoever tastes the Calafate berry will certainly return for more!

DAY 1 - Arrival in El Calafate. Optional activities at the lodge: walks, horseback riding, and swimming
Upon your early-afternoon arrival in El Calafate, you will be met and transferred to Eolo Lodge. After settling in at the lodge, you have the choice of participating in a variety of activities, from a guided or self-guided walk to horseback riding. Please check in with the reception to request a guided walk or for information on other activities. The walk to Cerro Frías (Mt. Frías) is gradual and offers wonderful views of the surrounding mountains, lakes, glaciers, and, if the weather is clear, a glimpse of the famous Torres del Paine in Chile, only 28 miles away as the crow flies but on the other side of the Andes. The total excursion is 4 to 5 hours and is easy to moderate in terms of activity rating. Or, you may choose to stretch your legs with a walk from the lodge to a nearby lagoon—home to flocks of bright pink flamingos—an incredible contrast to the steppe around you. Alternative activities include horseback riding (at your own expense) amongst the flora and fauna of the area; if you are lucky you will spot armadillos scattering about.

CW uses Eolo Lodge, El Calafate - A five-star Relais & Châteaux lodge newly constructed to evoke the grand ranches of the Patagonian steppe, with stunning views in all directions; comfortable and spacious, with all amenities and an indoor pool and sauna. Less than an hour's drive from the El Calafate airport, the lodge is nestled on 7,500 pristine acres.

DAY 2 - Estancia Cristina and Upsala Glacier; 30-60 minute trek or 5-hour trek
This morning, an early drive (approximately 7:15 a.m. departure from the hotel) takes you to Puerto Bandera to board the boat to Estancia Cristina. The 8:15 a.m. boat navigates the blue glacial waters of Lago Argentino, passing massive icebergs and offering striking views of the western front of Upsala Glacier ahead. One of the largest glaciers in South America, Upsala Glacier measures a stunning 6.2 miles wide and over 31 miles long! You continue on Cristina Channel for an afternoon at Estancia Cristina, in one of the most fascinating and remote Patagonian valleys. After a three-hour cruise, you reach the remote and historic Estancia, where guests joining the shorter (30-60 minute) trek option will enjoy a picnic lunch, a guided walk highlighting the ranch's impressive history and explaining the sheep and wool tradition in Patagonia, and a visit to a small museum, which holds many original pieces related to ranch life and work. You will travel via 4x4 vehicle to the Upsala Glacier for a once-in-a-lifetime experience—exploring the valley in the way gauchos and pioneers did. Guests seeking a challenging trek (5 hours total) continue via 4x4/jeep and, from a panoramic view of Upsala Glacier, begin a hiking excursion to the Canyon of the Fossils, named for the abundant fossils in the area. Upon returning to the main house, both groups depart by boat at 5:30 p.m. to navigate back to the mainland, reaching the lodge at approximately 7:45 p.m. This evening you enjoy another wonderful meal at the lodge.

DAY 3 - Perito Moreno Glacier; 2 miles, easy to moderate
Today you embark on a full-day glacial excursion that immerses you in this truly unique land. You have the opportunity to hear the thunderous cracking sounds of Perito Moreno Glacier, extremely active as it moves, and, if you are lucky, you will witness massive pieces of ice breaking off the glacier and plunging into the blue-grey glacial waters of Lago Argentino. The day begins with a boat excursion across the “Brazo Rico” (the “rich” branch of Lago Argentino) to the boardwalks of Perito Moreno Glacier. The meandering boardwalks lead you to different balconies for striking up-close views of the glacier.
An optional walk on the glacier itself is available to guests under age 65—age restrictions are set by the local excursion company. After a brief orientation, a short walk through thick birch forests along the lakeshore leads you to the glacier. Here, professional guides will place crampons on your feet and give you an informative talk on glaciology before you begin the glacier walk. (Please note: It is imperative that you are properly outfitted with hiking boots and cold-weather clothing.) If this is your first time walking on a glacier, we assure you it is an amazing experience on seemingly endless ice, viewing crevices, underground rivers, waterfalls within the glacier, and ice caves of iridescent and electric blue hues. Once off the ice, you trek back to a small mountain hut to warm up with hot drinks before reuniting with the other travelers on this small-group excursion.
If you are not participating in the glacier trek, you join the group for the one-hour boat excursion along the face of the Perito Moreno Glacier and then head to the glacier's balcony walkways via a tranquil forested trail to spend the afternoon walking to the different vista points. Both options include a picnic lunch with amazing photo opportunities.

From Pat's El Calafate trip: October 9-12 - Upon arrival in El Calafate you will be transferred to your boutique hotel Esplendor, located in the town of El Calafate, main entry to the Glaciers National Park, one of the region's UNESCO World Heritage sites. While in El Calafate, we have arranged for you to hike on the Perito Moreno Glacier. You will walk along the walkways facing the Perito Moreno for beautiful pictures of the ice wall. Later on, you will board a small boat and

navigate across the channel and disembark on the other shore where you will put on crampons and experience the amazing feeling of walking on the millenary ice. You could also visit a distant Patagonian ranch only accessible by boat. Estancia Cristina is surrounded by glaciers, lakes and granite mountains. The property has a small museum and a few wonderful activities available such as hiking, horse-back riding, 4x4 expeditions, etc.

Links:

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/argentina/tierra-del-fuego/ushuaia>

http://www.countrywalkers.com/sites/default/files/image_library/sales_itineraries/Argentina%20Southern%20Patagonia%20Itinerary%202015.pdf

http://www.interpatagonia.com/ushuaia/index_i.html

<http://experience.usatoday.com/food-and-wine/story/best-of-food-and-wine/2015/01/14/argentina-food-travel-primer/21704993/?csp=travel>