



Mendoza & Patagonia Argentina Trip Notes **November 11 – 24, 2014**

Overview from www.CountryWalkers.com: Bold and stunning scenery is the common theme in the varied and expansive landscapes of Argentina—along a route that follows the spine of the Andes from the wine country in the north to the peaks and shimmering lakes of Patagonia in the south, intimately linked to a fascinating culture embracing European and native traditions. From an optional stay in cosmopolitan Buenos Aires, your walking route begins outside Mendoza, Argentina’s robust wine-producing region nestled at the foot of the Andes—an idyllic home base with mountain views. Relishing the area’s famously gentle climate, you follow trails to the base of Mount Aconcagua—the highest peak in the Americas—and sample fine wines at two of the country’s oldest wineries. The spectacular Lakes District, gateway to Patagonia, welcomes you on the second half of the tour. Nahuel Huapi National Park, its emerald green lakes flanked by snowcapped peaks, invites you into an extraordinary destination of rare woodland distinguished by unique Arrayán trees—these indigenous Patagonian rainforest trees are a captivating image of cinnamon-colored bark and twisted trunks, some up to 400 years old! A walk on the Patagonian steppe brings you under an enormous sky and seemingly endless rolling terrain, with condors soaring above. The varied terrain and glacial lakes combine for breathtaking scenery on each walk. At day’s end, you are welcomed at elegant lodgings perfectly situated to highlight the beauty of the surroundings—a wine country retreat and an intimate lakeside hotel. Meals feature regional cuisine, such as traditional asado or barbecued meats, homemade empanadas, and world-class wines—topped off with the Argentine obsession, dulce de leche, a creamy caramel dessert.

Pros

- The southern hemisphere offers a way to get away from the weather. Or by logic it should.
- Different, a bit foreign, and somewhat stuck in the 40s or 50s.
- It is the same or similar time zone so no major jet lag. Or biologic it should limit the jet lag.
- Cost are pretty reasonable if you know how to use the dollar to advantage. Exchange rate is about 8.5 but you can get around 12 if you know where.
- Partiers and young abound.
- Airport security is super easy with liquids allowed, keep shoes and jackets on.
- Such glorious sights that you’ll want to go back.
- Buenos Aires has a European flair due to all the foreigners who immigrated. Argentina remains open to immigration.



I liked it all so much that I’m going back. This will be my third trip but next will be mostly to Southern Patagonia to the area known as Tierra del Fuego and the southernmost town in the world. The End of the World!

Glorious hills and lakes

We look pretty good after having come up that rock cliff, right? Honest, we did. I felt like superwoman until a friend writes back saying: “Those weren’t condors – they were vultures keeping an eye on you old folks.”



Cons

- Argentina has had bankruptcy(s) and rather severe inflation (40 to 52 percent last year depending on calculation) and it shows.
- Distances are great, transport costs high and not much is easy. Their past good train system is in ruins.
- Protests are common. Some even happen weekly (mothers with lost sons). They could make you late for your tango show (protests against the government).
- Even the air controllers are not shy about striking and just when I needed them. Twice during my trip.



Surprises

- Mate - the ceremonial drink of Argentina and Chile. We got an education and to experience Mate on our long boat ride across the lake. I was given a book with the whole story and also some herb mate to take home. I'm hoping that Security doesn't put me in jail.
- Friendliness of the Argentine excels anywhere I have ever been. They hug virtually any and everybody and it feels very sincere. I mean real hugs and kisses. Being called Darlin' just worked.
- In Buenos Aires, the domestic airport is an hour drive away from the international airport. And transport is not cheap.
- Tango shows either have many different styles or some are just made for the tourist. There theaters are rather extreme also. I will research better and try to find some old time tango show when I return.
- Buenos Aires is home of the new Pope and while everyone seems to love him, newspaper headlines suggested that there were not many folks of BA who go to church any longer.
- Inflation is so rampant that no one dares to save money and maybe this is another reason they are such partiers.
- Gas prices are not the eight and nine dollars a gallon like we see in Europe but rather around four dollars a gallon.
- My full bottle of wine in the restaurant was under \$12 US.
- Our hiking leader is owner and race director for three races at the southernmost point of the continent. He also needs leads tours into Antarctica.
- Dinner at 8 and in by 10:30? Nope – even later sometimes. I gladly skipped dinner as there is just so much eating and I would rather eat my peanut butter sandwich in my room than have another late night.



Notes home

Buenos Aires on my second day - Getting to Buenos Aires turned out to be a very nice experience. At the last minute I was upgraded and I sat next to a supremely interesting fellow. The United crew, which I know to be a continental crew, Visiting the fellow who was sitting next to me and he took their picture and they took his picture and where I couldn't get a drink he did get a drink, so I finally ask him if he was either a global member or an employee. He responded that he was sought have both in that he was the X CEO and also a global member for life. So I guessed but ask him "what's your name?" Gordon Bethune spent pretty much all of that 3 1/2 hours flight time telling me about his career, who he knew, how Continental made it so great, his background, and what he's been doing for the last 10 years. Since we were both somewhat in the mergers and acquisitions business we knew many of the same people which I think surprised him. He told me about his book and how daddy George Bush wrote the opening page, where he lived, and what he's doing now. Both of those last of which I either knew or could relate to or knew some of the same people, though I readily admitted that I didn't know them by having been invited to Bill Gates home but rather because they were on some of the same investor relations platforms as I was.

When we landed and he insisted upon walking me to my gate and then over to the United club I was more than flattered to realize that he had walked a long ways out of his way. But what a joke to realize that neither of us are beginner travelers but neither of us thought to look if the gate was still correct. So at the last minute I did an extreme run to another terminal to catch my flight just in the nick of time. May be that effort helped me sleep some of the 10 1/2 hours from Houston into Buenos Aires.

The Buenos Aires hotel

Thanks to an employee deal, I am able to stay at some of the top hotels. And I really appreciate them and even more so the price. The park tower is part of Sheraton's luxury collection where I would be housed for three nights and then one more night when I am done with my hike and return to the city. I like the private service of checking us in which include champagne and chocolates. I like the bigger rooms filled full of marble marquetry and deep dark wooden with nice moldings, wallpapered walls, Quality sheets with lots of down pillows and down comforter and the big wide window looking out over the park on the town but when the thick draperies are pulled there are still lots of down-lights, Reading lights and even closet lights. Bottled water and a large collection of crystal glass wear. The bathroom includes three rooms with double sinks and one room for the steam room and shower combination and the other room for the toilet and bidet all etched glass enclosed. You know what bidets are for don't you? To soak your laundry.

Yet I'm not sure they totally know how to do it. The Nespresso coffee maker only came with decaf and by the third request for regular coffee I was told they didn't have anymore. So we are at a standoff - my asking for either a different coffee pot or for them to go out and buy some regular coffee because no I don't want my butler to bring me coffee in the morning just like I did not want him to unpack my clothing. Nor did I trust leaving my shoes for polishing. The concierge lounge is closed so I go next door (which is fortunately all under one cover) to the Sheraton's 22nd floor concierge floor. My breakfast is moved to the second floor but it is a huge glorious room of all glass with Island after island of different types of food stuff.

Walking and more walking.

My first day I had already missed the guided tours so I went out on my own feet to refresh my memory of the busy city. I am near to the seaport, which actually is a huge river, and I am near to the famous Florida Street pedestrian mall area. One walks across a large hill and park filled full of Jacaranda trees that are in full bloom of a purple flower like I saw in Lisbon last June. Florida Street and includes a famous mall that is filled full of domed ceilings and frescoes and was built to have the appearance of the galleries Lafayette in Paris. It was already decked out for Christmas with a giant tree covered with Swarovski crystals and lights that was ever changing colors. We all gawked. I walked from end to end of the area and into some very simple areas that made me feel a bit too jostled so I made my backpack into a front pack and got out of there. I never saw trouble but I was told to be cautious and not to go walking at night.

A guided mini bus tour

While there was nothing new on this drive and walk through the city, it has been two years and I liked having the refresher course. I left the bus and the guide in Recoleta and walked the areas where Tom and I stayed when we were here for the Buenos Aires marathon.

My guided tours will include a tango show at a noted dinner theater built for that purpose. We went to Café Tortoni two years ago and it is very Parisian, lovely and we thought it was an excellent show. There are two other noted tango locations and I am going to the big one tonight. I walked by the other one in their hippy section. Supposedly Carlos Gardell was one of their most famous tango dancers who created his own type of style which included singing. Though he is long gone, he has quite a reputation, and the theater in his name looks very special. The dinner is set to be the best and includes drinks and it should.

Into Mendoza

I thought that the airport in Buenos Aires was one of the worst experiences I could remember in an airport. It was real Third World, it was jammed full of people, it was disorganized, and just as bad it was 5:45 in the morning. But then turn reminded me of my experience in Cuzco Peru and I guess they were equally bad airports, but seeing out to the airplane and then walking upstairs is not unusual

even in Europe. Fortunately I was met by a driver to take me maybe 40 minutes or so to tonight's new accommodations for three nights.

Two of our party up six should have been on my plane but they didn't recheck their air reservations and learned that their flight canceled and moved up to an earlier flight. So they had to take a long taxi ride which I think would have been spooky because I kept thinking I was being hijacked and being taken out to the boonies. Then when the car pulled into a locked gate and there was no indication it was a hotel, I again had that hijacked feeling. We are in a country home of maybe 12 rooms and though rustic it is very nice and plenty roomy.

A surprise is that it is well over 90°. I am not dressed for that but fortunately I am apprised that we will be hiking the mountains tomorrow where will be considerably cooler. As we drove here I could see the range of Andes Mountains in the distance. It would've made a good picture had I been able to catch some of the horse-drawn wooden carriages with the Andes in the background.

This is really a long ways from Buenos Aires. Though the flight is only two hours it really is a world away. I will be returning to the big city after this hike and I've even already booked another traditional tango show. It was sad to hear my fellow hikers having come through Buenos Aires but only spending one night and part of the day. No city tour, no Japanese garden, no walking the streets, no seeing the big port, nothing of the ancient colorful city, and no tango show. Yeah I realize that seeing the city more close-up is not for everybody and for some just saying that you been in Buenos Aires would be enough.

I was asked "how do the BA people look?" Somehow it works that their famous tango dance is very sensual because the people themselves are too. Even on the streets. Women are a bit more curvaceous and even the thin ones have a bit of a booty and boobs and like showing it off. Yet I saw very few really fat people only a bit of love handles. The eyes and hair are dark making even the men sensual looking. Whereas much of Latin America like to wear clothing that is a bit tacky looking in my book, in Buenos Aires there seems to be more of a conservative look. There are street people but not as many as I expected especially considering that they have so much good weather and it is rare to be bothered by the street people.

My last full day in the city I stayed to the streets walking first to their New port area and finally down their huge maybe 20-lane avenue called 9 July in honor of their Independence Day and around the opera and back behind to the legislative area with huge Parisians styled buildings. I ate in a little local joint that had no English spoken and pointed to the food I wanted and then walked back by Avenue liberator through an embassy area. With our hotel concierge I did a little research of the other tango places and booked a show and dinner for my return visit. By evening my little tootsies had all they could handle and besides, I knew I had to get up at 4 AM and I have been troubled by a sleeping disorder. That translates to no sleep. (I've always thought when you get sleepy enough you will fall asleep. I wonder when that will happen.)

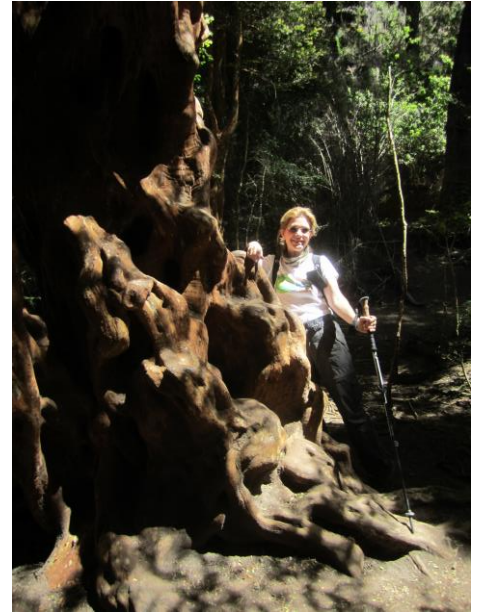
Over the hill - the giant hills of the Andes

Because it was hot in Mendoza and because it was clear weather up in the Andes range, we traded wine tasting for hiking today. It is a long, almost 2 1/2 hour drive but you have the snowcapped Andes Mountains for the full drive to get there. Plus a few interesting stops. But gads it was a curvy road! The highest mountain in South America and one of the highest in the world was in our view most of the day. It is called Mount Aconcagua and is known as one of the famed seven summits so it is a magnet for mountain climbers worldwide. We stopped in the little village that is one of the last for gearing up for the hike. I remember a similar looking village for gearing up at the Inca trail.

This mountain is different in that though it is 23,000 feet high you can drive up to about 9000 feet and if you are carrying your own oxygen it is relatively easy to trek versus climb all the way to the top of the peak. The roof of the Americas. (It's not like Mount Everest, where one must hike 5 to 7 days just to get to the base.) Our second guide who we had only for today has gone to the top 32 times. And since he is only 30 I wonder if he has a life. We saw various animals but the exciting critter was a condor which as you know has a 9 foot wingspan. Thus it even showed up in my camera lens.

There is a cemetery for Aconcagua climbers. Or ex climbers.
Ummmmm

Our hike was sort of a Wimpy one of about 4 hours and no more than a 400 foot elevation gain but then we went onto the optional swinging Bridge. It kept me feeling like I was still swinging long after I left it. Why elevation in the southern hemisphere it said to be tougher I can't imagine but my heart sure did race fast much of the day even though I wasn't doing the usual deep breathing. There were various stops on our drive including some village vendors and one really unique natural rock formation which was known as the hot springs at the Inca Bridge. Other than that it was part of the Inca Trail the interest was that it reminded me of Mammoth Springs up in Yellowstone. The locals put various objects such as wineglasses, wine bottles, little children shoes, little cups, with in the waterfall of the hot mineral springs so they become covered over with this yellow Clay substance. Something for tourist to pack away but fortunately we have no shoppers in our group of six.



Naturally there are ski areas along this route and I saw a sign reminding me that if you continued Westerly you would come to Santiago and go by their famous ski area. Which by the way, United Airways is opening a flight direct into Santiago starting in December. Very tempting as I haven't been there since mid-90s. When I traveled south of Santiago at that time, I would come home and say it was like being in the 50s. I guess this area of Mendoza is somewhat similar and may be a bit more like being in the 40s.

Monday must be wine tasting!

The weather simply would not cooperate and we even saw some very rare humidity on top of 95°. Both of our tour guide said that they can't remember ever seen such temperatures. So we look over at the mountains and hear that there was so much rain we would not be able to go had we waited the day because of road wash outs but there we are in the bold sunshine sweating. Apparently Mendoza not only suffers from even more earthquakes then I realized, but also something like the Santa Anna winds which has something to do with the cause of extreme hailstorms. Imagine that the wine vineyards must be covered to protect not from the birds but from hail. Hail would not only take out all of that seasons of growth but enough damage that the following year would be rather useless also.

I've been on a wine tour more than once. Ha ha. But I did learn a few things new and tasted some pretty good wine. That was in the morning about when I thought we should be having breakfast but in the afternoon we had an all different type of a wine tour. The vineyard owner, an engineer by trade, walked us through his Vineyards having us pick one leaf each time we stopped at a different variety. That Leaf was to be our ticket for wine during our barbecue lunch. That picked leaf would be different for every variety and he explained how to tell what kind of grapes and thus wine would be produced by that plant. It would have been more interesting if it weren't so hot. Fortunately most of the time we found some shade in either poplar trees for weeping willows.

There is more but I'm barely done with wine tasting and lunch until I have to go to dinner. And my other gripe is that we have to leave at 6:30 in the morning to catch our flight down to Patagonia. Via Buenos Aires for heaven sake. This is one big country but real backwards in their transportation.

About the partying Argentines

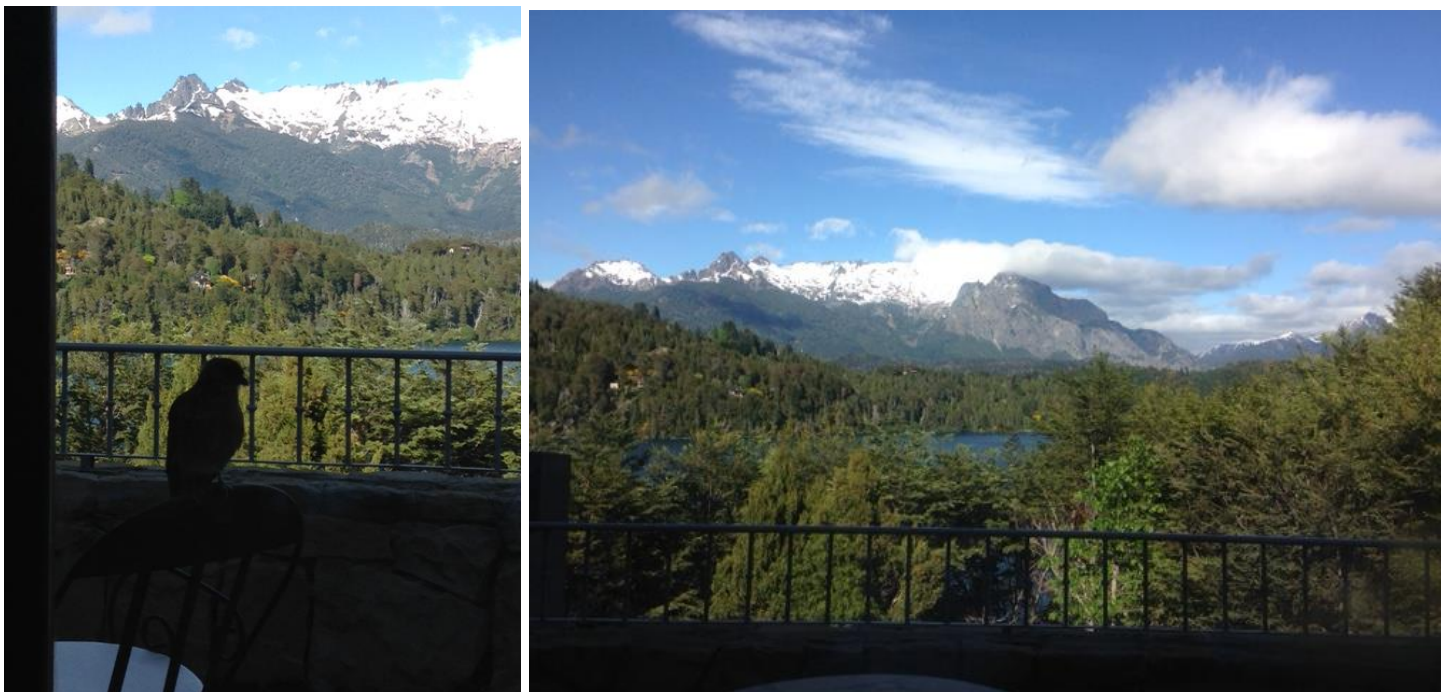
Sunday morning as we were leaving, some were just coming home from their all night Saturday party. I've heard from various sources that the South Americans and definitely those in Argentina and Brazil, really like to party. Equally that they don't care what it cost. I wondered why in Buenos Aires there were blocks and blocks of restaurants and how could they all get filled. This is the answer. A mid-day siesta is alive and well. Shops do not reopen until 5 PM. This makes sense because of the heat of the day. Thus as we were leaving the restaurant it would be starting to fill up around 1030 at night as much because they're going to spend the night out. Poor folks last night never got to have their dinner because all the lights went out around 10:30 PM. Maybe that just made for a different kind of party.

Connection from Mendoza to Bariloche had to go through Buenos Aires!

There had been a direct flight, but it was canceled. Enroute, up early, I had to send Tom this message: I'm not where I'm supposed to be. In Buenos Aires with controller strike. But going by van to the intl airport an hour away and booked on 8:30pm flight to Bariloche. No one is upset. We shall just go tour BA again.

Earlier: Connection to Patagonia in BA failed. Two canceled flights. Trying to find another way. Controller strike by the best I understand. Worst case is a night in BA. Smile.

Arrival in Bariloche



Out my deck – a falcon type bird and a glorious view though we'd not be able to see it until the next morning, having arrived well after midnight. I think the birds are Cara-Cara.

Here we are in the lakes region of northern Patagonia. Despite a controllers strike and it taking us all day to get here, it might be worth it. From 5am until about 1am transport event. Now I see the view out my room which I share with some kind of falcon. After extreme heat of Mendoza I will surely enjoy the cold here.

Pictures by Dani our tour guide with his GoPro. Now why would friend Jon suggest that it was not Condors we were seeing but rather vultures who were watching this 'old' crowd!

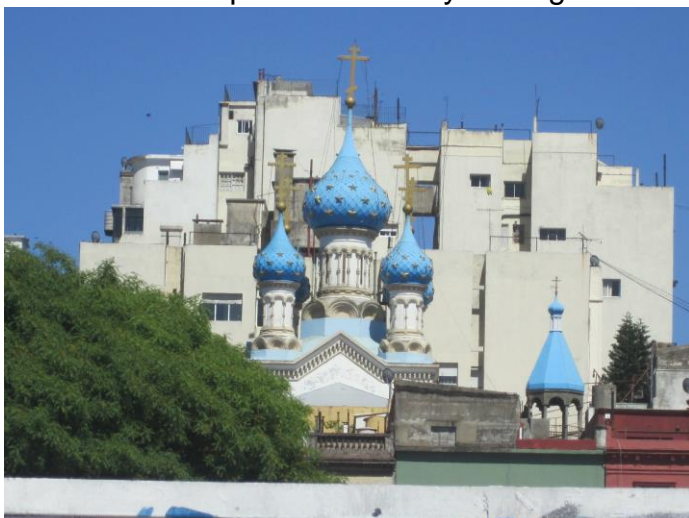


My last night in Buenos Aires

I got another tango show! Still different yet but more like a cross between a Las Vegas or Broadway show and Cirque d' Soleil. My third and I'll be looking for another type of tango show when I return in February.

Miscellaneous pictures

Though I have about 500, I'll spare you but a few. I'll add Tom's photo show link from two years ago for Buenos Aires pictures. <http://www.photoshow.com/watch/Ad3bA5fT> Plus at the end I'll add our Buenos Aires trip notes from 2 years ago.



Buenos Aires at least is very religious tolerant with mosques and synagogues plenty. The cemetery is the most interesting outside of Milan's and contains those who want to spend a lot and those who are revered. The Evita tomb is probably one of the most visited.



I walked the new Port area on two occasions and learned how this swivel pedestrian bridge operated. Along the old factory area where locals say they can't afford but the tourists support are miles of waterways, restaurants that are packed, and a couple Tall Ships.



The parks are generous in size and lovely with the local Jacaranda trees which were in purple bloom like I saw in Portugal in June. I'm reasonably sure that this girlfriend was picking lice from boyfriends head. Sweet. But the local airport mess of folks was not sweet at all. It was really a mess and darned near third world. Only because someone took pity on me and moved me up the line did I make my flight. The local airport is about an hour drive from the international airport.



We walked the parks, downtown and neighborhoods of Mendoza where it was in the mid-90s. The shade of the many parks was welcome. Note the basket: That's for trash and to keep out the many homeless (but well cared for) dogs. The houses were varied from mansions to shacks. I was fascinated by the big houses that own the front sidewalk with each and every one different. The last was a welcome relief to return 'home' to our out-of-town lodge.



So many surprises! From the cowboy at the tallest mountain in the southern hemisphere to a helicopter just moments later. Then there was momma . . . a highlight of the trip coming up.



We would work hard to hike to an area that seemed remote and where no one had ever been. We'd bypass trails and see "no passage" signs where we'd bushwhack. Then suddenly there was momma who had brought us a delicious if not gourmet picnic. Wine, beer, sauces and flavors, hot soup then hot tea. Fancy dishes. However she carried it in was a surprise. She was momma to our local guide.



The boat that would take us on our hiking location, and second local guide who would give us a lesson in the Argentine mate ceremony on our 45-minute ride. He was son of momma the cooker who surprised us still again with the hot crepes with sauce.



The remote picnic location where we were given our second picnic surprise, and then the boat that would retrieve us.

The next day would bring even bigger surprises, some more than some might have wished for.



That's us scrambling up the Cliffside – the same hilltop pictured at the very first of this report.



An even better picture might have been us as our mouth dropped to see still another picnic and wondering how momma ever got it up there. We'd barely consumed our hot soup, hot multiple types of gourmet sandwiches and treats, until along floated the sound of a violin and viola, appeared the violinist in white shirt who played for us as it echoed of the Cliffside. Condors flying overhead.

Taken hillside, next to the picnic, from under the tent.





We weren't done with surprises: on the way down, this is the bridge we would traverse. As we held onto the sides.

Here's Diana! Happy to be down on solid ground.



Itinerary from Country Walkers

Sat – Nov 15 - DAY 1 of hike

Exploration of Mendoza, 2-3 hours, easy to moderate - Upon arrival in Mendoza, you are met at the airport and proceed directly to your hotel for the next three nights, a country house-style property located in a picturesque village called Chacras de Coria, only 20 minutes from the regional capital of Mendoza, the heart of Argentina's best-known wine routes and gastronomic venues. The hotel reflects the art of combining Andean stone with typical desert wood, resulting in a natural, modern aesthetic. The swimming pool, set in a garden, promises tranquil afternoons and calm nights. This area of ranches is renowned for its warm microclimate and scenic location at the base of the Andes.

Following time to settle into your room and a traditional lunch at the hotel, you set off for an introductory walk to become acquainted with your surroundings. You explore the Plaza de Independencia and Emilio Civil en route to General San Martin City Park. Originally designed as a training site for the Argentine Army, the park's beautiful rosedal or rose garden and Cerro de la Gloria (Mt. Gloria) are now open for exploration by locals and travelers. Atop Mt. Gloria, sweeping views unfold of Mendoza with the backdrop of the Andes mountain range. This afternoon you return to the hotel with time to relax before dinner at a favorite restaurant within walking distance, toasting the start of your adventures with wines from surrounding vines.

Hotel Lares de Chacras, Chacras de Coria for 3 nights <http://laresdechacras.com/en/info@laresdechacras.com>. Located in a picturesque village with tree-lined streets on the outskirts of Mendoza, this family-run, country-style house is built in traditional Andean style using local wood and stone. Amenities include a pool, lovely common areas, and a wonderful wine cellar.

Sun – Nov 16 - DAY 2 of hike

Full-day wine tour of the Clos de Chacras and Norton wineries; 2 hours walking, easy. Following a good night's rest, you wake to a satisfying breakfast at your hotel. Mid-morning, you set off for Clos de Chacras, a boutique winery constructed in 1921 but with a history dating back to 1883. Recently restored to its original grandeur, the bodega uses the latest technology to ensure production of some of the country's most delicious wines, some of which you will have the pleasure of sampling alongside the bodega's owner, whose grandparents started the winery. Next you visit the Bodega Norton, a classic Argentine winery started in 1895 by one of the pioneers of Argentine viticulture, Sir Edmund James Palmer Norton. Among the growing vines, you are enlightened by our expert guide, who gives a detailed explanation about the leaves, grapes, and techniques of cultivation. In the heart of the vineyard—aromatic with the smell of the earth and the fresh breezes coming off the nearby mountains—appetites are whetted for the next quintessentially Argentine experience: the asado. During this participatory feast, you learn about Argentina's barbecue tradition as you help prepare it, which is an art in itself! Enjoying the fruits of your labor in the beautiful vineyard gardens, you taste some of Mendoza's best Cabernet and Malbec wines, while savoring insights from your wine expert.

You return to your hotel in the late afternoon with time to enjoy its pool and grounds, or to simply relax. Later, you venture out for dinner at a celebrated restaurant in the city of Mendoza.

Mon – Nov 17 - DAY 3 of hike

Horcones Valley; 4-5 hours, moderate, 400-ft. elevation gain and loss; walks are at an elevation of over 9,000 feet. Today you set out early for a two- to three-hour scenic drive in the direction of the snowcapped Andes Mountains, and the starting point for a full day's invigorating walk. The day's destination is the Horcones Valley at the base of Mount Aconcagua; which, at 22,944 feet, is the highest mountain in South America and, as one of the famed "Seven Summits," is a magnet for dedicated mountain climbers worldwide. The drive follows the Rio Mendoza through the small town of Potrerillos, into the Uspallata Valley, past Mount Penitentes (a local ski area), and over the famous bridge of the Incas, a geological and historical site where Incans soaked in the curative hot spring waters. The walk is a moderate route into the Horcones Valley, which eventually leads to Mount

Aconcagua. Your extremely accomplished mountain guide—who has summited Mount Aconcagua 32 times! - accompanies you through rolling terrain at over 9,000 feet. Wildflowers flank the path, which leads toward the south face of Aconcagua and provides incomparable views of the snowcapped peak. A picnic lunch is unpacked in the fresh air, in full view of Mount Aconcagua.

Returning to your hotel later in the day, you may enjoy your final evening in Mendoza as you wish, either by opting to stay at your hotel and enjoying a gourmet meal in the hotel's dining room, or by following your guide's suggestions for a nearby restaurant within walking distance.

Tue – Nov 18 - DAY 4 of hike

Transfer to Bariloche (half day of travel).with air ticket purchased by C.W. Cerro Llao-Llao; 3 hours, easy to moderate, 650-ft. elevation gain and descent. Today you fly to northern Patagonia, better known as the Lakes Region of Argentina, not far from the border with Chile, a geography of peaks, lakes, and unique forest. Upon arrival at the airport, you proceed to your hotel for the next four nights, a lakeside property located on the San Pedro Peninsula, just 25 minutes outside the city of Bariloche. Surrounded by breathtaking scenery of forested hills and crystalline lakes, the hotel is perfectly situated for your explorations of the region. Its 10 exclusive rooms, overlooking Nahuel Huapi Lake, feature individual balconies and access to the deck. The incredible views are sure to inspire you to stretch your legs after your journey.

After settling in, you then venture out to the scenic Llao-Llao Municipal Park. A sustained ascent brings you to a mirador, or lookout; you will want to have your camera ready! The wooded path leads past giant Coihue trees, which may be 500 or 600 years old; the colorful Arrayán trees, a variety of myrtle with twisted branches and smooth, red peeling bark; and the ever-present cypress with thick hanging moss. The walk culminates at the edge of Nahuel Huapi Lake, where glacial waters tempt the hardy for a brisk swim. Later in the afternoon, you return to the hotel with time to relax before a fine dinner in the hotel's intimate restaurant, which serves locally produced Argentinean meat and local organic vegetables, prepared on the grill or in its clay oven.

Hotel Hotel Aldebaran in Bariloche for 4 nights; <http://www.aldebaranpatagonia.com>. Located on the sparkling shores of Nahuel Huapi Lake, this intimate boutique hotel welcomes you each evening with charm and comfort. This hotel boasts luxurious rooms with private balconies and amenities including a spa and gourmet restaurant.

Wed – Nov 19 - DAY 5 of hike

Isla Victoria; 4 hours, easy to moderate. Today's excursion begins by navigating across the sparkling waters of Nahuel Huapi Lake and up to Victoria Island, rich in natural beauty and part of the Nahuel Huapi National Park, one of Argentina's oldest and largest parks. The island itself was originally called Nahuel Huapi, meaning "Tiger Island" in the aboriginal Mapuche language; this name was later applied to the entire lake. The 12-mile-long island is full of centennial cypress, native trees, and exotic fauna. You set off on a trail leading past isolated beaches and among a network of unique trees such as the ancient Arrayán, with its cinnamon-colored bark and white flowers. A natural wildlife reserve, Victoria Island is home to an amazing diversity of flora and fauna. If you are quiet and a little lucky, you might spot deer or pheasant. You enjoy a delightful picnic lunch on the island during this full-day visit.

Returning to your hotel later in the afternoon, you may choose to unwind in its spa facilities. Dinner this evening is at a favorite pub-style restaurant not far from the hotel.

Thu – Nov 20 - DAY 6 of hike

Patagonian Steppe; 4 hours, 700-ft. elevation gain and descent, easy to moderate. Today is dedicated to exploring the Patagonian steppe. Immense, and in places rugged and harsh, the steppe

is a unique habitat characterized by vastness of land and horizon, with evidence of human history dating back over 12,000 years. Extending from the Andes Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean, the geography is made up of high plateaus, long ridges, and deep valleys with a geological composition of sand, rock, and volcanic ash. The low, bushy, and thorny vegetation that is typical of the region is home to a variety of fauna such as guanaco, foxes, maras (the Patagonian rabbit), and condors.

The day starts at Laguna de Los Juncos, with its unusual rock formations with condor nests above, and with spectacular views looking over the Pichi-Leufu River Valley. At the highest point of the walk, your guide prepares a typical Patagonian lunch. A sustained descent leads to the walk's conclusion, and you return to the hotel in the later afternoon. You are free this evening to head to a nearby restaurant, or perhaps to stay in and enjoy the hotel's restaurant, which specializes in homemade pastas and wood-fired pizzas.

Fri – Nov 21 - DAY 7 of hike

Brazo Tristeza Balcony; 4 hours, 650-ft. elevation gain and descent, easy to moderate; optional afternoon of easy kayaking. Please note: a short section of this walk requires crossing a wooden bridge with a steep drop-off on one side. If you have any concerns about vertigo, we strongly urge you to phone our office. Early risers this morning may wish to take a short walk, following the path down from the hotel to the lakeside dock. Following breakfast, you depart for Bahia Lopez, the start of the day's walk. The route begins near the rocky beach of Nahuel Huapi Lake, along a wide, wooded trail, and continues on a gradual but steady ascent, flanked by purple mutisia wildflowers. After a short, steep rocky section (**the section that could be uncomfortable for those who have concerns about vertigo**), you are rewarded with outstanding views of the surrounding mountains, including the 12,000-foot, glacier-capped Mount Tronador, an extinct volcano that marks the border between Argentina and Chile. Upon arrival at a natural balcony, carved out of the granite cliffs by glaciers, you relax and enjoy a gourmet lunch prepared high in the mountains— food for the body and spirit. With luck, you may spot giant condors soaring in the wind. Condors are among the largest flying birds in the world, and to see them on the wing is truly a breathtaking sight.

After descending from the loop walk and returning to the hotel, this afternoon a kayaking option is available for those who wish to enjoy the scenery from another vantage point. This easy, guided paddle on Nahuel Huapi Lake is a wonderful way to spend a summer afternoon in Bariloche. The waters are generally calm, and the lake is edged with lush vegetation and diverse wildlife. Others may wish to take the afternoon to relax at the hotel or perhaps enjoy its spa. Another option is to take a taxi to downtown Bariloche for shopping opportunities. Tonight you celebrate your final evening together in true Argentine style at an exclusive private restaurant featuring local organic gourmet cuisine and fine Argentinean wines.



Buenos Aires Trip Notes **October 4-13, 2012**

Since the impetus for the trip was a marathon, we'll start there. For what it was, here's my initial report and some initial pictures of the area:

Know when to hold 'em; know when to fold 'em. Or DNS as in "Did Nothing Stupid" in Buenos Aires -- in marathon jargon. I quit early and walked home and if I really believe my own propaganda that it's all about the travel, then it's all totally fine. I will celebrate my 8th DNS and be grateful for 101 previous finishes. I don't think there's another marathon registration in my future that has a 6 hour cut off.

Here's my story and I'm sticking to it: I started this morning at 5:15, got a taxi at 6:30 and arrived in plenty of time for the 7:30 start. It was cool at 60 degrees with quite a bit of wind (from 13 to 20mph), very light rain with heavy rain expected. Walking to the start I was pretty sure that 42 kilometers was not in my future both because I didn't 'want' to do it and because of various nitpicky excuses: Last night I had limped home from a long day touring, this morning my hips felt awful, and who likes to run in the wind, rain and with slippery cobblestones.

By the time the three huge sag-wagon buses were right behind me and they were tearing down the barriers and power washing the trash away right at (on!) my feet, the writing seemed on the wall. And that despite my still being on time to my usual 5:45 pace band (I usually hold that until about the half-way point to take advantage of the cooler morning temps.) I did see a unique and mystery occurrence: runners around me were gleefully accepting the sag wagon ride and waving to me as to suggest I get on the bus too. Do you suppose they take them on the route then drop them at the finish line? Had I not seen the course by car the day before I might have checked it out. But I don't need another medal and I didn't need the very long walk or taxi home (a 20 minute ride.)

There is so much the same with marathons in the US and marathons in other countries but also some major differences that I'll try to list in a trip report eventually.

All very interesting as is Buenos Aires with none-the-least challenge being finding so few folks who speak English. Even at the Sheraton Hotel where I went for bearings after doing about 10 kilometers and trying to call Tom on my borrowed cell (it was giving me an error message that was Greek to me), it was a challenge to find an English speaker. Wouldn't you think there would be a concierge or desk clerk who spoke English?

So I came home, had a big breakfast with Tom, a nap and just now I'd be coming in from a 42 kilometers so I trust and hope I did the right thing and live to not regret finishing the Buenos Aires Marathon.



We have tickets to a Tango Show this evening at a famous old time café called Café Tortoni. We might hire a private tour guide again. We love the Parisian scenes but they sure are intermixed with junk and poverty, dog poop and a mixture of people. This is after all South America but with a distinctive European flair that we like.



Marathon notes

- Registration is a challenge because there is no English translation and inserting the link into 'Google Translate' only goes to the home and second page – then up pops a note suggesting “illegal.”
- Medical form appeared to be required but none supplied.
- Confirmation of registration is equally difficult.
- “Kit Removal” email reminds registrants that a medical form on doctor’s letterhead is required as well as two separate declarations. Ugh. Then double ugh when they never asked for it at kit-removal – after my extensive efforts to get a form and the doctor’s appointment.
- T-shirt is a high quality bright orange but with the CLARO cell advertisement and a long torso, huge, sleeveless model. That’s what we got in other foreign locations such as Stockholm and Rio. Here they wear the marathon shirt on race day and up to two names can be imprinted without charge.
- At “kit retrieval” at a convenient expo center there were many differences: many volunteers taking a very long time to go back and acquire one’s goody bag and shirt; no official merchandise; lines for getting name onto shirt; lines for getting wrist band imprinted.
- While kit retrieval was nearby in Ricoleta, the start and finish line was about a 20 minute cab ride northerly.
- One of the host hotels was in Ricoleta and seems to be in a good area. It’s the same hotel used by one of my hiking companies so must be okay.
- Start line had usual porta-potty lines with what’s becoming the norm at foreign marathons – gross toilets that are so bad as to not be mentionable or useable.
- Start line oddly didn’t begin forming up until about five minutes prior to the start with no one paying attention to the wrist bands given us for our starting time.
- Security guards were lined up facing the spectators, one about every ten feet, for nearly a mile. Have they had spectators rushing onto the course? Security is a big thing here with guards at every store and police on every corner.
- Big red school buses (sag wagons) followed the runners who were still on a 5:45 finish pace at 10K. They did have a 6 hour cut off. Runners oddly and happily got onto them; I can’t explain that unless it’s like we saw at Jacksonville where the slow runners got a ride to the finish then got out and finished.
- Course follows many of the main tourist sites and only one small part is iffy. Our tour guide had taken us through much of the course the day before.
- Finish line? I have no idea. But if it is typical Argentine, it was exuberant, a little bit lacking in organization but fun and plentiful.
- Cut off? I can see by the results that they really did cut off at 6 hours.
- Website – despite my complaints, here’s a picture from their front page web site about results and photos. Of course they couldn’t know I didn’t finish but they probably liked the Liberty Lady crown. I’m not so sure they could read the “Kicked Asphalt” shirt from Philadelphia 2008. (My uniform.)



Rules from the marathon website – for your amusement

For your safety during the race note:

☑ located in the row according to their estimated time career. Note that there are signposts to the time estimated to reach the goal. The test is long, avoid a push or fall.

☑ Do not leave the official route of the race, you run the risk of accidents, and can also be disqualified.

☑ Avoid spitting or blowing your nose. If you must take care to affect others.

☑ taper the running speed when approaching a water station or relief.

☑ If you decide to slow down or walk, slowly veer to the side of the road and do not stop in the middle of it, think of others.

☑ Do not take with one hand along the route. Is forbidden and dangerous.

☑ No Apine around the first tables of hydration, continue a few meters ahead, volunteers will do their best to serve you.

☑ When disposing of bags of water or hydration drink glasses, do it to the side of the street, outside the "race track".

☑ Inform family and friends who will compete in the event and possibly make the trip with his training partners, this is encouraging and safer.

Our apartment is an important aspect of travel

We enjoy learning the local community and how better than to shop and live within it? And we can't see any reason for traveling with less than we have at home so our apartment(s) represent that philosophy. This one had been found by Tom last summer for friends so this feels like a second time.

From www.vrbo.com

Luxury & Elegance in Fabulous Recoleta 2+2 Apt

Ultra-Elegant Modern LUXURY in Vintage RECOLETA building. This beautiful Apartment is a HUGE 1800sq ft (170 meters), 2 bedroom/2.5 bath, office, art studio and loft, combining antique and modern furnishings, high 16-17 foot ceilings, broadband with WIFI, LCD TVs, and air/heat in every room. It is located the top floor of a 19th Century French style corner building with marble entrance and period wrought iron elevator. This is a "WOW" property! Located in the most desirable BA neighborhood of Recoleta, this ultra-luxury apartment is just 2 blocks from the famous Recoleta Cemetery and village. Wonderfully spacious with huge formal dining area, modern gourmet kitchen, expansive tiled entry, and incredible light from floor to ceiling windows and cathedral lighting from both vintage crystal chandeliers and new Designer Art lighting.

Living/dining area The((18x36) living room, includes two 16 foot double French doors that lead to wrought iron balconies and two antique crystal chandeliers reflected in antique mirrors, as well as a 42" flat screen TV/DVD player.

Master bedroom features Carrera marble staircase to an all marble bath lit by more chandeliers. Private office space and art studio loft overlook living areas. Both bedrooms have king beds and generous floor to ceiling closets of beveled mirrors and 32" flat screen TVs. The kitchen is gourmet equipped with temperature controlled "wine cellar" and all new appliances. On longer stays (7+ days) a washer drier are made available. Maximum capacity 6 people. Not recommended for children under twelve years of age.

This 5 star property has been completely renovated with the amenities you have grown to expect while honoring the elegance of time past, and is managed by a professional mgmt team. A wonderful melding of antique and modern, is reflected in both the architecture and the furnishings. The property is rightfully featured on the 'estudiohoma' website for award winning Buenos Aires based Hitzig Miletello Architectos. For music buffs, it is the former home of the famous Argentine rock star, Andres Calamaro, who composed much of his music here.

*Living Room: A lovely tiled entrance frames the fabulously spacious (18x38) living area with 16 foot ceilings with elegant contrast of antique moldings and modern exposed brick walls. Furnishings are a combination of antiques and modern comfort. Authentic Antique crystal chandeliers completely refurbished and multiply reflected in floor to ceiling (16') mirrors
42" Sony LCD TV with enhanced cable and DVD. 2 small wrought iron balconies entered via floor to ceiling double French doors.
Light filled both day and night*

Dining Room: French Antique formal dining table with Raiz Denogal hardwood. Opens to bar fronting the kitchen to facilitate

entertaining and casual use. Fabulous modern Designer Chandelier. 16' ceiling with French coving.

Bedroom #1: King sized bed with luxury mattresses and bedding; Electric, programmable safe; Custom made designer, floor to ceiling closets featuring beveled mirrors. 32" LCD TV with enhanced cable. Mood lighting plus 2 reading lamps. Custom stairway leading to private office. 16 foot ceiling.

Master bath: Accessed via Carrera marble steps, double sinks & luxury bath with shower and sitting area. Mood lites and Designer chandeliers. Bidet.

Bedroom #2: King sized bed with luxury mattresses and bedding. Custom made designer, floor to ceiling closets featuring beveled mirrors. 32" LCD TV with enhanced cable. Mood lites plus 2 reading lamps. 16 foot ceiling,

Bathroom #2: Luxury bath with custom designed tub/ shower and sink, combining stone, cemento lisado and exotic woods. Bidet. Designer modern art lighting. Hairdryer

Guest 1/2 Bath: Mood lites. Designer sink. Custom designed.

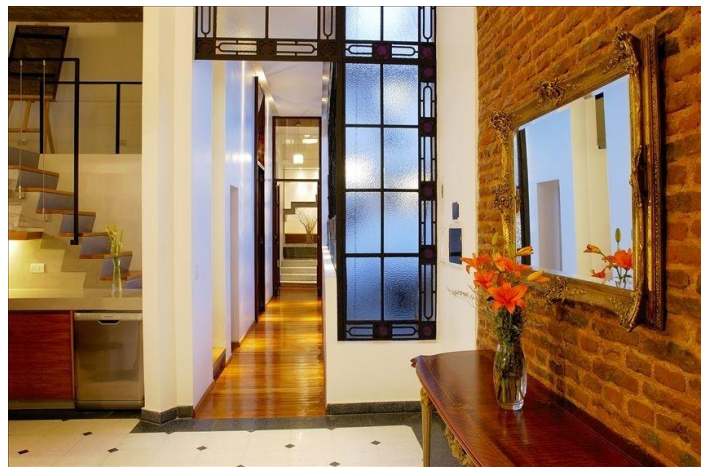
Kitchen: Custom kitchen combining high end cemento lisado with custom made black marble sink. Architecturally designed to insure an open airy feeling allowing for fun and formal. Full sized microwave and refrigerator/freezer Built in dishwasher, Domec oven and in counter stovetop with Franke stainless hood. Equipped for your gourmet dining with dishes from Claudia A.

Art Studio/loft: Quiet light space for art, reading or quiet contemplation. Optional sleeping for 2 people in 2 twin beds. Electric piano.

Miscellaneous: -Wi-Fi throughout the apartment (2 routers wired for extra coverage); -Comp cell phone with local number (you buy the minutes). -Local phone line with unlimited free local calls. -Optional unlimited calls to the USA/Canada with IP phone. -Extensive cable featuring local along with CNN, BBC, Fox, ESPN, E!, MTV, Hallmark, TNT, WB, National Geographic, Discovery Channel, Animal Planet, etc. -Individual Air/Heating in each room for optimal comfort. -Iron and ironing board. -Washer/ Dryer for stays +7 days. -Wkly maid service included (stays +7 days). -Daily housekeeping service available at a fee. -A cook is available optionally



Night view from balcony; 1895 French style building; Entrance with antique cage elevator



***High beamed ceilings with French coving accentuate the exposed brick;
Glass and Old Brick frame the View down the Hall***



***Master Custom Closets with Beveled Mirrors and architectural stairs to office;
Master bath with Custom Carrera Marble and Chandeliers***

Touring has become a First Priority

This trip was made easier by an excellent tour guide. Our rental apartment had a concierge and he set up a reasonable taxi (\$47) for the 45-60 minute ride from the airport into town. He also set up a wonderful tour guide with private car and driver but we knew it was a wild price at \$80 an hour which we were assured was the going price. (NOT! As we would learn from tourist offices later.) But our guide was wonderful and since he took our offered card and later went onto Tom's website, we heard from him in due course. I can guess that he came through an agency with a commission to at least a couple people and that contacting him at another time would be better pricing. Yet I'd still use the agency with the stupidly high price if that were the only way to get Sebastian Airdi. We now have contact at Sairaldi@hotmail.com. He is the son (aged 42) of an recently retired Argentine diplomat who lived in many places in the world thus the son is fluent in English (born in London), French, Portuguese, Italian (mother's family is Italian) and of course Spanish and is a fount of information on Buenos Aires.

Buenos Aires has 3 million inhabitants in city center and another 9 million in the surrounding but still greater Buenos Aires so it can be hustle and bustle like most of us rarely see. A tour guide is handy to have.

The city reminds us of Paris in the early 70s before it got cleaned up, complete with broken sidewalks and dog poop everywhere. But when you consider that they were bankrupt in 2001, it's amazing what they've done. I suspect in another 10-20 years that it will be a tourist mecca – though some think of it that way now due to its Parisian look. It is interesting that one of the calling cards for us was that it would remind us of Paris. So why not just go to Paris? That we will do again next March taking Marie along. We were there this April.

I will leave the photo taking to Tom's photo show at www.Tomskoi.com – click on photo shows.

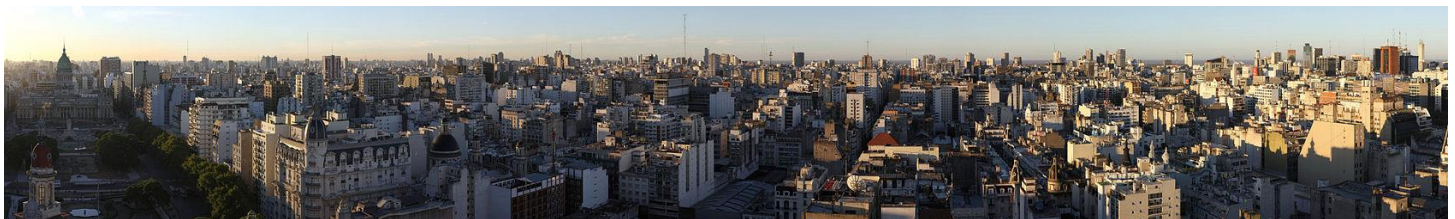
How does Argentina compare to Switzerland – where we were a couple weeks ago?

- Upon landing in Argentina and having to pay \$160 per person visa charge . . . I thought NOT very well.
- Upon finding the first toilet, I thought NOT very well.
- Upon having the first Argentine offer to help us read our map, VERY well. Twice in the first day someone found us on a street corner looking at our map and insisted on helping. Once in the supermarket a sweet lady asked for Tom's glasses so she could read his list in order to help.

- Personalities? Extreme! Our super smart friend Ellen summarized it this way: I'm guessing that the essence of the difference is that Switzerland is more structured, "buttoned down" and precise while Buenos Aires is more exuberant. There's also a very different social structure. But you're so right to feel gratitude that you can enjoy both!
- Language? Nearly everyone in Switzerland speaks English. Almost no one does in Buenos Aires.
- Garbage, broken or torn up sidewalks, and dog poop everywhere in Buenos Aires; the Swiss would never allow a spec of trash to be dropped and always maintain perfect maintenance.
- Argentina prices are pretty reasonable; Swiss is out of sight.
- Switzerland has fountains; Argentina has fountains PLUS more statues than even Paris.

Eating in Buenos Aires

My favorite was a little French café near to the famous Florida shopping street (not far from Harrods) and on Place St Martin. Near to our apartment we were directed to a local haunt with many casserole type dishes from the French bean casserole to a British shepherd's pie. A Spanish restaurant behind the famous Palace Alvear might not have ever seen a tourist and had all the usual empanadas and tamales with their different and flavorful corn. At one old mansion converted into a museum was a gatehouse made into Madame Croque where of course the French croquet monsieur was the usual. Pastry shops gave us empanadas and the Delta gave us a magnificent fresh whole fish dinner like we've never encountered before. Always there was the quality Argentinian wines as well as inexpensive carafe wines that could have been from anywhere. Rarely was there an English speaker oftentimes resulting in some amusing choices.



Panorama of [downtown](#).

The Pink Presidential Palace and also home to a lot of demonstrations, something the Argentines know how to do as well as the French. It is said to be a national sport but the 'mothers' who demonstrate for the missing 30,000 children and grandchildren of the last torturous regime have a good reason. An old regime was known for missing people and the dumping of bodies in the ocean is a known fact. The Palace is at the Plaza de Mayo; the demonstrations can and are everywhere.



Theaters are said to be more plentiful here than anywhere in the world. Yet apparently they don't all survive because El Ateneo is listed in the World's Ten Best Bookshops and it's in this gorgeous and huge theatre. The stage is the café. Argentina folks have the highest percentage of reading books in Latin America. I never saw a Kindle or Nook. Just like in Paris – books everywhere on the subway but NO e-readers whereas get onto any American transport and that's about all you see. Here's from the web: *The bookstore to end all bookstores, at least in South America, is the majestic and stunning El Ateneo on Avenida*

Santa Fe in Buenos Aires. Where else can you sit in a theater box and leisurely read a volume of Neruda, or sip a cortado where Carlos Gardel once performed? In a city with a rich literary history and excellent bookstores, this theater cum bookstore is a historical and beautiful building to visit, and a great place to stock up on books and music. In 1919 a young man named Max Glucksman decided to construct a theater house that would be both grand and splendid. Newly immigrated to Buenos Aires, Glucksman was a visionary who saw his dream realized and opened his new theater, appropriately named The Grand Splendid. For years the theater presented Argentines with performances of all kinds and local greats such as Gardel and Corsini graced the stage. In 1924 Glucksman began broadcasting Radio Splendid from the fourth floor of the building, and his recording company Odeon recorded some of the early Tango greats. In the late twenties the theater was converted into a movie house and in 1929 showed the first movies ever presented with sound. In its final metamorphosis the Ateneo was converted into the bookstore that it is today, but despite the abundance of books, the building still feels very much like the glorious theater it once was. The ground floor is home to the main collection of works, everything from Borges and the classics to Asian cookbooks and Lonely Planet travel guides; the stock is vaguely reminiscent of a

massive Barnes and Nobles, only in Spanish. There is a small selection of English books, but it is mostly standard airport fare with a few volumes of Shakespeare thrown in for good measure.

Theatre Colon or Opera House



I collect tours of opera houses and I can see where this one deserves to be listed among the five top and most famous in the world. It's been in this location since 1908. It seats 2,500 and has hosted the greats from Maria Callas, Enrico Caruso, Luciano Pavarotti, Richard Strauss, Arturo Toscanini and Igor Stravinsky. Musical activity covers all genres especially the tango. According to aficionados, the theatre acoustics are almost perfect. Its dome was is both painting and stained glass, and the theatre has a gigantic crystal chandelier with more than 700 lights. It's said to have more magnificent acoustics, opulence and even grander than Milan's La Scala. It has an interesting beginning with an eventful 18-year building process involving the death of two architects and the murder of another. Pavarotti said that the Colón has only one flaw: the acoustics are so good, every mistake can be heard. The golden room reminded me much of the Stockholm opera house only larger. We fortunately had a tour guide who sang to us.



The Republic of La Boca and Petite Camilito

To see street performers of tango, and hippy residents and junk art shops, this is probably the oldest place in Buenos Aires to go and it sits right at the harbor. It's colorful and very run down with shacks painted in odd but vibrant colors (whatever colors they got from the ships) and cobblestone streets and a plethora of pickpockets. It is at the stadium for soccer a major event in this country. I wouldn't walk there alone at night but was glad to have a tour guide take us from one side to the other with a car meeting us on the far side. It was a world apart from their SoHo of nice designer shops and little coffee bars. Yes, they tried to succeed and become a republic something like Christiania in Copenhagen and Freemont (sp?) in San Francisco.

Café Tortoni and Tango

We would have front row seats for their tango show as set up by our guide; we would return still another time for coffee and drinks. Both Tango and Café Tortoni are a Buenos Aires tradition and the café is pretty much copied from a Parisian brasserie. See pictures on Tom's photo show. www.TomsKoi.com.

From the web: *Founded in 1858, Café Tortoni is the oldest coffee shop in the whole country. With a very rich history, it is visited at all times by intellectuals, politicians and artists. Going into the Tortoni to have a cup of coffee, to meet someone there, to attend any of the innumerable cultural functions offered there, is getting into the very kernel of tradition. Tradition is not the past. Tradition, transmission, comes from tradere, to give. Tradition is the offering of the best of the past to the men of the present and the future. It is not only in the walls of the Tortoni - which in themselves are worthy of a museum - but mainly in the spiritual climate that its management has wisely created, that the best of our porteño past can be found. And one day we shall find the best of the present*

there, once it has aged enough. The tourist who arrives in Buenos Aires has the entire city in the Tortoni: the past, in its walls; the present, sitting at its tables; the future, in the enthusiasm of the people who work there for the sake of culture.

Listed as one of top 10 cafes in the world at <http://www.acityguides.com/cities/top-10-cafes.html>:

Inspired by late 19th-century European coffeehouses, this art nouveau café became an essential cultural stop in Buenos Aires over the years. Many of the city's famous names made it their second home, and it remains a must-see for its stained glass, marbles, bronzes, woods, and photos on the walls. In addition to coffee and some wonderful pastries, it also offers tango shows and poetry recitals at night. Locals still outnumber tourists, who especially love the "chocolate con churros" specialty surrounded by the timeless atmosphere.

Tango has an odd history. It was the lower class if not the prostitutes that developed the tango in Buenos Aires and thus it was basically outlawed or at least shunned. Yet the wealthy kids learned it and on their European adventures they taught it to the French and thus it returned to Argentina as an art. Their tango dancers are treated as heroes and idolized.

Ricoleta Cemetery

The Ricoleta cemetery where Eva Peron (Evita - 'Don't cry for me Argentina') is buried alongside BA's elite families was almost as fascinating as the famous cemetery of Milan. This one is quite condensed but with majestic tombs that cost the same as a house and is a status symbol to have. It is a city within a city with its layout reflecting the design of BA and of course Paris. It also gives an historic overview of the rise and fall of the politicians of Argentina. We had a guided tour and then returned the next day to check it out even more. I don't think it's possible to see it all in a week. Yet there are always crowds of hero worshipers there to see Evita's tomb.



San Telmo

This is the oldest barrio (neighborhood) of Buenos Aires from 17th century when the Jesuits established it and it remains well-preserved with all its original colonial buildings. Cafes, tango parlors, antique shops, junk shops all in a narrow cobblestone street atmosphere complete with the oldest church and an old market where they still sell product like in 40s. The main public square of Plaza Dorrego would be a Montmartre were it on a hill. Our super guide knew a shop serving locals unique pizza type food; the three of us ate and drank beer for a song.



the
the

Old wealthy estates can still be imagined but they moved out in the 1870s when a yellow fever epidemic required moving towards the newly established Ricoleta area. The estates later were cut into numerous small tenant dwellings and that's primarily what is seen now. It's said to currently be an important art center.

Yes, there's even a Japanese Garden

Said to be the largest in the world outside of Japan . . . it was worth a visit but if Kyoto is a 10 and Portland an 8, this was a 4 or 5. Each



immigrant group has their own park or plaza or statuary and Japan has the garden.



Hotels

Some pretty fine and ritzy hotels are available to include the 5-star Palace Alvear, the Park Hyatt in an old estate but modernized and the Marriott which was the old Plaza Hotel is listed as being one of the ten best bars in the world. We made an effort to have a drink in all of them and I'd intended to have the pricey tea in Palace Alvear but oddly it didn't start until 5pm which is too close to dinner hour.

Subway

Like most European or big cities, except those in America.... there are good and cheap subway systems. We would ride the early 1900 wooden cars Line A. Budapest retains their original wooden subway cars too. From the web: *The subte, from "subterráneo" meaning underground or metro, is a high-yield system providing access to various parts of the city. Opened in 1913, it is the oldest [underground system](#) in the Southern Hemisphere and second oldest in the Spanish-speaking world after Madrid's in Spain. The system has six lines, named by letters (A to E, and H) There are 74 stations, and 32 mi of route. An expansion program is underway to extend existing [lines](#) into the outer neighborhoods and add a new north-south line. Line "A" is the oldest one (service opened to public in 1913) and stations kept the "belle-époque" decoration, the trains still sport incandescent-bulb illumination and doors must be manually opened by the passengers, as in 1913. Daily ridership on weekdays is 1.7 million and on the increase. [Fares](#) remain relatively cheap, although the city government hiked the fares by over 125% in January 2012. A single journey, with unlimited interchanges between lines, now costs AR\$2.50, which is roughly USD\$0.60.*

Outside of Buenos Aires – The Delta

There are only a handful of Deltas in the world and this one is one of the largest with the Ganges in India being larger. We would take a train to San Isidore where the rich live and where the living is much slower and calmer and the streets are tree lined with shops only a couple stories high. Then onto Tigre where it's the same sort of thing but more mixed economically but where it's the start of living on the water. A boat trip is needed to see the multitude of islands connected only by ferry or private boat and where both the rich and the poor co-mingle. Quite interesting.

From the web: *Tigre is a town in the Buenos Aires Province situated 17 mi north. Tigre lies on the Paraná Delta and is an important tourist and weekend attraction, easily reached by bus and train services, including the scenic Tren de la Costa. It is the principal town of the Tigre Partido. The town sits on an island created by several small streams and rivers and was founded in 1820, after floods had destroyed other settlements in the area, then known as the Partido de las Conchas. The area's name derives from the "tigres" or jaguars that were hunted there, on occasions, in its early years. The area was first settled by Europeans who came to farm the land, and the port developed to serve the Delta and to bring fruit and wood from the Delta and ports upstream on the Paraná river. Tigre is still an important timber processing port. The "Puerto de Frutos" (fruit port) is now a crafts fair located in the old fruit market by the riverside. Antiques shops, riverside restaurants and pubs, the casino and Parque de la Costa, an amusement park and its renowned natural beauty make Tigre a popular tourist destination throughout the year. Tigre is also the starting point for a visit to the Paraná Delta. For locals and tourists alike, vintage mahogany commuter launches and motorboats are the favorite way to travel through its web of inter-connecting rivers and streams. English-style rowing clubs, countless marinas, humble dwellings and elegant mansions from the "Belle Époque", such as the Tigre Club, are to be seen, as well as small pensions and upscale lodges, restaurants, teahouses and simple picnic sites. Tigre has, in recent years, seen an influx of people relocating to the city from other parts of Greater Buenos Aires. In recent years it has seen a rise in upmarket tourism, spawning new spa developments and clientele such as the pop star, Madonna.*

Directional challenges south of the equator?

Tom has an amazing sense of direction and it is rarely to be questioned; he remembers streets and restaurants many years later. Me, I have no sense of direction and get turned around so I'm always especially impressed. Note that Tom has never been to South

America, never south of the equator. While on this trip I decided there must be some reverse magnetism because he continually got totally turned around. Something interesting was going on so I asked smart friend Ellen what she thought. Her response, in part:

Is it possible that the sun at noon is actually north? I'm used to it being in the south. Most people who have good directional sense are used to locating themselves by where the sun is. It comes up in the east, moves to the south at noon, and sets in the west. In Buenos Aires, it appears

(see: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecliptic> for a diagram) that the sun rises in the east, moves NORTH at noon, and sets in the west. If Tom is used to the sun being south at noon, it can be very disconcerting to have it appear in the North.

At my mention of the reverse winds in typhoons and hurricanes, she added: That makes sense. The moon also moves along the ecliptic. The moon's magnetism causes the tides, as the moon's movement around our planet attracts the water molecules so that a rise in sea level sweeps around the earth pulled by the moon. If the moon is north in the southern hemisphere and south in the northern hemisphere, the spiral movements of water would turn in opposite directions.

Ego of Argentinians

It is said they have no end to big egos. Our tour guide told us a number of jokes:

- *How does an Argentine commit suicide?*

He jumps off his ego.

- *How do you recognize an Argentine spy?*

From the sign on his back that says "I am the greatest spy in the world."

- *A man meets an Argentine on the street and asks him for a light. The Argentine starts patting his pants, chests and back pockets. "Sorry", he says, "I can't find my lighter-but man, do I have a great body."*

- *Why does an Argentine look up in the sky when there are storms and lightning?*

Because he thinks that God is taking pictures of him.

- *What is the best deal on earth?*

To buy an Argentine for his true value and then sell him for what he thinks he's worth.

- *What is ego?*

Ego is the little Argentine inside each of us.

- *Why does the Argentine climb to the top of the Eifel Tower?*

To see if Paris is still pretty without him.

- *An Argentine asks a Spaniard, 'Friend, do you know which country is closest to heaven?*

Argentina, I suppose, retorts the angry Spaniard. No, friend, says the Argentine. It's Uruguay! (Argentina's neighbor)

- *A psychologist calls her colleague at 2 am. It's an emergency! she says. At two in the morning? It better be good, says her colleague. I have a unique client, says the first. It's an inferiority complex! An inferiority complex? But they're so common!' shouts the colleague. The psychologist responds, Yes, but ... an Argentine?*

My take: There's a bigger 'BUT' here I can't buy the ego theme as it simply doesn't stand up to logic. I understand that plastic surgery is very common and even a bragging right; anorexia and bulimia are common; they refuse to ask for plain water in a restaurant or for a doggy bag for fear of soiling their image; having a plot in Ricoleta cemetery is a status symbol; there are more psychologists in Argentina than in any other country; winning at soccer and polo is a life and death deal, etc., so if image is such a frail thing, then is not their ego going in quite the opposite direction?

Medical, taxes, nationalization, language, etc.

We learned a lot from the locals but nothing as important as on our own. Tom forgot one of his prescription medications and it was somewhat vital. Just on the off chance we went into a pharmacy and inquired and for a very fee smaller than most American deductibles, he got a full box of a medicine! We learned that medical care is reasonable and totally free. That unions are obligatory but generally accepted since there are so many perks that come with them (such as social clubs and camp grounds in the Delta.) Maybe as bad or worse than in America, everyone looks to earn money in the black so as to avoid taxes.

The Argentine history of nationalization is almost amusing. They keep going back and forth and have just nationalized a major Spanish oil company that's now in the courts. Once they had no assets left and couldn't get a loan. Everyone wants US dollars now and probably because they've been through so much inflation that this is a reasonable safety net. Once inflation was something like 5000%. Yes, all those digits. They'd buy something and by the time they got to the cash register it had gone up. So they lopped off a bunch of zeros once the peso stabilized. Even the tour books say not to save pesos for the next trip because inflation would eat it up. Then we found unmarked doors where we learned we could exchange dollars for 6.20 instead of the official 4.60. If this keeps happening the possible next tour to Mendoza and Patagonia might be a real deal

But overall when it's considered that the country was bankrupt in 2001, it's amazing how well they do.

Oddly we found very little English spoken. Though it's taught in school, very few owned up to having even a word or two. We can only surmise that its somewhat like us Americans – English, like Spanish, is such a familiar and common language that they don't need it.

Landlady coincidences

One of those small worlds or six degrees happened when I found that the landlady lives in Point Reyes California where I go next. She has two other homes under www.vrbo.com there too as well as a B&B. Then another coincidence – she and husband are from Peru where I go on the trip after next.

Population

The population of Buenos Aires has hovered around 3 million since 1947 due to low birth rates and a slow migration to the suburbs. The surrounding districts have expanded over fivefold (to around 10 million) since then. The majority of porteños have European origins, with Italian and Spanish descent being the most common. Others include Polish, Arab, German, French, Irish, Dutch, Greek, Portuguese, Norwegian, Russian, Swedish, Croatian, and British. In the 1990s there was a small wave of immigration from Romania and Ukraine. The Criollo and Spanish-aboriginal (mestizo) population in the city has increased mostly as a result of immigration from the inner provinces and from other countries such as neighboring Bolivia, Paraguay and Chile and Perú, since the second half of the 20th century. Important Syrian-Lebanese and Armenian communities have had a significant presence in commerce and civic life since the beginning of the 20th century. The Jewish community in Greater Buenos Aires numbers around 250,000 and is the largest in Latin America and the second largest in the Americas.

Political side per New York Times - April 2012

Argentina rebounded from its economic crisis of 2001 with steady economic growth, disrupted only briefly by the global slowdown triggered by the financial crisis of 2008. In 2010, the economy grew by 9.2 percent, the fastest in Latin America. And as its economy recovered, so did the political prospects of President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, who was re-elected by a wide margin in October 2011. Mrs. Kirchner, who succeeded her husband, Néstor Kirchner, in 2007 to become the country's first female president, made a remarkable comeback. By 2009, her combative style, highlighted by a heated dispute over agricultural export taxes, sent her approval ratings below 30 percent, and economists predicted doom for the subsidy-heavy economic model first orchestrated by Mr. Kirchner. By the time of her re-election campaign, by many measures Argentina was booming: the economy was expected to grow by 8 percent in 2011, the fastest growth in Latin America; employment had reached record levels; and the poverty rate had been cut by

more than half since 2007, the government said. The country continues to benefit from heavy government spending, high commodity prices and strong demand from China for its agricultural products.

Still, in re-electing Mrs. Kirchner, voters seemed willing to look past some troubling signs. Inflation soared to over 20 percent in 2011, second only to Venezuela's among major Latin American economies, economists said. And the government has continued to govern with a heavy hand and little tolerance for opponents, including among the news media. Opposition candidates tried to seize on those issues but gained little traction with voters.

Nationalizing the Nation's Largest Oil Company- In April 2012, Mrs. Kirchner announced that the government would seize a majority stake in YPF, the nation's largest oil company. The expropriation would reassert state control over an important pillar of Argentina's economy, but it has increased diplomatic tensions with Spain and the European Union.

Under Mrs. Kirchner's plan, which she announced on national television, Argentina's government would take a 51 percent controlling stake in YPF, which is now majority-owned by a Spanish energy company, Repsol YPF. Of that new stake, Argentina's central government would get 51 percent and the country's provinces 49 percent. The plan is part of a bill submitted to Argentina's Congress that is widely expected to be approved. The Spanish government repeated its earlier pledge to retaliate, though it did not specify how. Following an emergency cabinet meeting in Madrid on Monday evening, José Manuel García Margallo, the Spanish foreign minister, said that Madrid "condemned with the utmost energy" Argentina's move. The European Union also criticized the plan. Repsol owns 57 percent of YPF and said Monday that it would study "all legal options available" to defend its interests and those of shareholders against a forced sale. It was not immediately clear how YPF's shareholders would be affected by the takeover. A tribunal would determine how much compensation that Repsol and other shareholders would receive for their YPF shares. Mrs. Kirchner said that the expropriation of YPF, a company founded by Argentina's government in the 1920s and privatized in the 1990s, was a "recovery of sovereignty and control." She said the move would allow Argentina to raise production, after the country had recently become an energy importer. For months, the central government and provincial officials had pressured YPF to raise its investments in Argentine production. The government's tactics had included revoking concessions for coveted fields. Seizing YPF appears to be a popular move in Argentina, where caps on residential energy prices and a growing economy have helped push energy demand to new highs. And many Argentines still resent the privatization of state-owned companies in the 1990s, so taking on YPF gives Mrs. Kirchner the opportunity to go after a symbol of that time.

Mrs. Kirchner had already nationalized Argentine Airlines and pension funds, while also pressuring companies in Argentina to repatriate export proceeds in an effort to slow capital flight. Seizing control of YPF sent a new signal about Argentina's policies toward foreign investment, especially in the energy sector.

Background - During the 1990s, seeking to tame hyperinflation, Argentina had tied the value of its peso to the American dollar — a "convertibility" strategy that proved unsustainable because of rising global interest rates. The country privatized many industries, which led to high unemployment but also made Argentina's economy more efficient. By 1999, however, it was clear to most economists that Argentina was marching inexorably toward a default and devaluation. The number of people under the poverty line was growing — it peaked at more than 50 percent of the population in 2002 — and unemployment was soaring.

Social tensions rose. There were eight general strikes in Argentina in 2001, with looting and thousands of roadblocks. Huge lines formed outside many European embassies as waves of Argentines fled their country. In December, the government fell, and the departing president fled as a riot raged below. Over the next 10 days, four presidents assumed power and then quickly resigned before a fifth, Eduardo Duhalde, declared the currency devaluation. A short time later, Congress formally approved the debt default that was already a de facto reality.

In 2003, Mr. Kirchner was elected to succeed the interim president, Mr. Duhalde. Mr. Kirchner embarked on a new economic model — the one that his wife continued to follow. Its pillars are sustaining a weak currency to foster exports and discourage imports, and maintaining fiscal and trade surpluses that can be tapped for financing government and paying down debt.

The Argentine government waited until 2005, when its economy was already in recovery, to conduct the first of two debt States — took haircuts costing them two-thirds of their investments. Notably, the one creditor that was paid back in full — in 2006 — was the International Monetary Fund, to which Argentina owed \$9.8 billion dating to the 1990s. Since paying off the International Monetary Fund, Argentina has not borrowed from the fund. That enabled the Kirchner governments to avoid the agency's typical prescription of cutting state spending.

The Argentine government has maintained hefty subsidies on energy and some food to avoid public discontent — steps that would be anathema to the monetary fund. But high commodity prices have helped let Mrs. Kirchner maintain popularity at home through generous government outlays.

Next? Unusually Tom is now home until the Vienna trip for Christmas and New Years with Marie. And now unusual is that I'm immediately off to a hiking trip at Point Reyes National Seashore after a couple days in San Francisco and ending with a few days in Morgan Hill south of San Jose for a marathon. Then it's another hiking trip in the Tucson area with favorite leaders Steve and Nola before a very quick turn-around to Peru. That's all before December when I go to Dallas for a marathon, then later to Houston for End of the World Marathon and Day After (for optimists). Marie comes on December 23rd. Big deal Vienna trip! Life is good.

Itinerary 2014 - Argentina is 2 hours later

Tue – Nov 11

4:30pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#1178
7:20pm Arrive Houston IAH for plane change

9:00pm Depart Houston IAH via UA#819

Wed – Nov 12

10:30am Arrive Buenos Aires EZE

Car pick up arranged by hotel concierge Gaston Guerra - Gaston.Guerra@starwoodhotels.com

Available options from the airport to the hotel: Trustworthy transfer companies like transfer express, manuel tienda leon or vip cars with desks in the hall after luggage claim. Taxi Ezeiza (white and blue taxis).cost between 400/450 (\$53). Avoid the black and yellow cabs at the airport. Or a car from the hotel at 700 pesos + 21% tax and have it charged to the room. (840 pesos=\$100.)

Hotel Park Tower, a Starwood hotel
Avenida Leandro N. Alem 1193, Buenos Aires 1001 Tele 54 11 4318 9100

Sat – Nov 15

7:15am Depart Buenos Aires AEP domestic airport via Aerolineas Argentinas #2530
Operated by Austral Lineas Aereas

9:05am Arrive Mendoza Argentina MDZ

Picked up at Mendoza airport by Country Walkers representative

Summary from www.CountryWalkers.com: *As a Guided Adventure, this trip is one of our signature travel experiences and has been designed to let you leave all your cares behind—from 24/7 guides and accommodations to meals, transportation, and local wine or beer with dinner—you are assured an exceptional active-travel group adventure.*

Overview: *Bold and stunning scenery is the common theme in the varied and expansive landscapes of Argentina—along a route that follows the spine of the Andes from the wine country in the north to the peaks and shimmering lakes of Patagonia in the south, intimately linked to a fascinating culture embracing European and native traditions. From an optional stay in cosmopolitan Buenos Aires, your walking route begins outside Mendoza, Argentina’s robust wine-producing region nestled at the foot of the Andes—an idyllic home base with mountain views. Relishing the area’s famously gentle climate, you follow trails to the base of Mount Aconcagua—the highest peak in the Americas—and sample fine wines at two of the country’s oldest wineries. The spectacular Lakes District, gateway to Patagonia, welcomes you on the second half of the tour. Nahuel Huapi National Park, its emerald green lakes flanked by snowcapped peaks, invites you into an extraordinary destination of rare woodland distinguished by unique Arrayán trees—these indigenous Patagonian rainforest trees are a captivating image of cinnamon-colored bark and twisted trunks, some up to 400 years old! A walk on the Patagonian steppe brings you under an enormous sky and seemingly endless rolling terrain, with condors soaring above. The varied terrain and glacial lakes combine for breathtaking scenery on each walk. At day’s end, you are welcomed at elegant lodgings perfectly situated to highlight the beauty of the surroundings—a wine country retreat and an intimate lakeside hotel. Meals feature regional cuisine, such as traditional asado or barbecued meats, homemade empanadas, and world-class wines—topped off with the Argentine obsession, dulce de leche, a creamy caramel dessert.*

Sat – Nov 15 - DAY 1 of hike

Exploration of Mendoza, 2-3 hours, easy to moderate

Upon arrival in Mendoza, you are met at the airport and proceed directly to your hotel for the next three nights, a country house-style property located in a picturesque village called Chacras de Coria, only 20 minutes from the regional capital of Mendoza, the heart of Argentina's best-known wine routes and gastronomic venues. The hotel reflects the art of combining Andean stone with typical desert wood, resulting in a natural, modern aesthetic. The swimming pool, set in a garden, promises tranquil afternoons and calm nights. This area of ranches is renowned for its warm microclimate and scenic location at the base of the Andes.

2:00pm Following time to settle into your room and a traditional lunch at the hotel, you set off for an introductory walk to become acquainted with your surroundings. You explore the Plaza de Independencia and Emilio Civil en route to General San Martin City Park. Originally designed as a training site for the Argentine Army, the park's beautiful rosedal or rose garden and Cerro de la Gloria (Mt. Gloria) are now open for exploration by locals and travelers. Atop Mt. Gloria, sweeping views unfold of Mendoza with the backdrop of the Andes mountain range. This afternoon you return to the hotel with time to relax before dinner at a favorite restaurant within walking distance, toasting the start of your adventures with wines from surrounding vines.

Hotel Lares de Chacras, Chacras de Coria – 1st of 3 nights
Larrea, 1266 Chacras de Coria
5505 Chacras de Coria, Mendoza, Argentina Tele: 011 54 26 1496-1061
<http://laresdechacras.com/en/> info@laresdechacras.com
Free WiFi in public areas only; hair dryers upon request
Per Carla in reception, no refrig or coffee in "classic" room; requested upgrade but unavailable currently

Located in a picturesque village with tree-lined streets on the outskirts of Mendoza, this family-run, country-style house is built in traditional Andean style using local wood and stone. Amenities include a pool, lovely common areas, and a wonderful wine cellar.

Sun – Nov 16 - DAY 2 of hike

Full-day wine tour of the Clos de Chacras and Norton wineries; 2 hours walking, easy.

Following a good night's rest, you wake to a satisfying breakfast at your hotel. Mid-morning, you set off for Clos de Chacras, a boutique winery constructed in 1921 but with a history dating back to 1883. Recently restored to its original grandeur, the bodega uses the latest technology to ensure production of some of the country's most delicious wines, some of which you will have the pleasure of sampling alongside the bodega's owner, whose grandparents started the winery. Next you visit the Bodega Norton, a classic Argentine winery started in 1895 by one of the pioneers of Argentine viticulture, Sir Edmund James Palmer Norton. Among the growing vines, you are enlightened by our expert guide, who gives a detailed explanation about the leaves, grapes, and techniques of cultivation. In the heart of the vineyard—aromatic with the smell of the earth and the fresh breezes coming off the nearby mountains—appetites are whetted for the next quintessentially Argentine experience: the asado. During this participatory feast, you learn about Argentina's barbecue tradition as you help prepare it, which is an art in itself! Enjoying the fruits of your labor in the beautiful vineyard gardens, you taste some of Mendoza's best Cabernet and Malbec wines, while savoring insights from your wine expert.

You return to your hotel in the late afternoon with time to enjoy its pool and grounds, or to simply relax. Later, you venture out for dinner at a celebrated restaurant in the city of Mendoza.

Hotel Lares de Chacras, Chacras de Coria – 2nd of 3 nights

Mon – Nov 17 - DAY 3 of hike

Horcones Valley; 4-5 hours, moderate, 400-ft. elevation gain and loss; walks are at an elevation of over 9,000 feet

Today you set out early for a two- to three-hour scenic drive in the direction of the snowcapped Andes Mountains, and the starting point for a full day's invigorating walk. The day's destination is the Horcones Valley at the base of Mount Aconcagua; which, at 22,944 feet, is the highest mountain in South America and, as one of the famed "Seven Summits," is a magnet for dedicated mountain climbers worldwide. The drive follows the Rio Mendoza through the small town of Potrerillos, into the Uspallata Valley, past Mount Penitentes (a local ski area), and over the famous bridge of the Incas, a geological and historical site where Incans soaked in the curative hot spring waters. The walk is a moderate route into the Horcones Valley, which eventually leads to Mount Aconcagua. Your extremely accomplished mountain guide—who has summited Mount Aconcagua 32 times! - accompanies you through rolling terrain at over 9,000 feet. Wildflowers flank the path, which leads toward the south face of Aconcagua and provides incomparable views of the snowcapped peak. A picnic lunch is unpacked in the fresh air, in full view of Mount Aconcagua.

Returning to your hotel later in the day, you may enjoy your final evening in Mendoza as you wish, either by opting to stay at your hotel and enjoying a gourmet meal in the hotel's dining room, or by following your guide's suggestions for a nearby restaurant within walking distance.

Hotel Lares de Chacras, Chacras de Coria – 3rd of 3 nights

Tue – Nov 18 - DAY 4 of hike

Transfer to Bariloche (half day of travel).with air ticket purchased by C.W.

Cerro Llao-Llao; 3 hours, easy to moderate, 650-ft. elevation gain and descent

Today you fly to northern Patagonia, better known as the Lakes Region of Argentina, not far from the border with Chile, a geography of peaks, lakes, and unique forest. Upon arrival at the airport, you proceed to your hotel for the next four nights, a lakeside property located on the San Pedro Peninsula, just 25 minutes outside the city of Bariloche. Surrounded by breathtaking scenery of forested hills and crystalline lakes, the hotel is perfectly situated for your explorations of the region. Its 10 exclusive rooms, overlooking Nahuel Huapi Lake, feature individual balconies and access to the deck. The incredible views are sure to inspire you to stretch your legs after your journey.

After settling in, you then venture out to the scenic Llao-Llao Municipal Park. A sustained ascent brings you to a mirador, or lookout; you will want to have your camera ready! The wooded path leads past giant Coihue trees, which may be 500 or 600 years old; the colorful Arrayán trees, a variety of myrtle with twisted branches and smooth, red peeling bark; and the ever-present cypress with thick hanging moss. The walk culminates at the edge of Nahuel Huapi Lake, where glacial waters tempt the hardy for a brisk swim. Later in the afternoon, you return to the hotel with time to relax before a fine dinner in the hotel's intimate restaurant, which serves locally produced Argentinean meat and local organic vegetables, prepared on the grill or in its clay oven.

Hotel Hotel Aldebaran, Bariloche – 1st of 4 nights
Avenida Bustillo Km. 20,400 - Península de San Pedro, R8401AHR
San Carlos de Bariloche, Río Negro Province, Argentina Tele: +54 294 444-8678
<http://www.aldebaranpatagonia.com/> info@aldebaranpatagonia.com
Yes Wi Fi (free?) and hair dryers; per Alexandra, no refrigerator or coffee service in room

Located on the sparkling shores of Nahuel Huapi Lake, this intimate boutique hotel welcomes you each evening with charm and comfort. This hotel boasts luxurious rooms with private balconies and amenities including a spa and gourmet restaurant.

Wed – Nov 19 - DAY 5 of hike

Isla Victoria; 4 hours, easy to moderate

Today's excursion begins by navigating across the sparkling waters of Nahuel Huapi Lake and up to Victoria Island, rich in natural beauty and part of the Nahuel Huapi National Park, one of Argentina's oldest and largest parks. The island itself was originally called Nahuel Huapi, meaning "Tiger Island" in the aboriginal Mapuche language; this name was later applied to the entire lake. The 12-mile-long island is full of centennial cypress, native trees, and exotic fauna. You set off on a trail leading past isolated beaches and among a network of unique trees such as the ancient Arrayán, with its cinnamon-colored bark and white flowers. A natural wildlife reserve, Victoria Island is home to an amazing diversity of flora and fauna. If you are quiet and a little lucky, you might spot deer or pheasant. You enjoy a delightful picnic lunch on the island during this full-day visit.

Returning to your hotel later in the afternoon, you may choose to unwind in its spa facilities. Dinner this evening is at a favorite pub-style restaurant not far from the hotel.

Hotel Hotel Aldebaran, Bariloche – 2nd of 4 nights

Thu – Nov 20 - DAY 6 of hike

Patagonian Steppe; 4 hours, 700-ft. elevation gain and descent, easy to moderate

Today is dedicated to exploring the Patagonian steppe. Immense, and in places rugged and harsh, the steppe is a unique habitat characterized by vastness of land and horizon, with evidence of human history dating back over 12,000 years. Extending from the Andes Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean, the geography is made up of high plateaus, long ridges, and deep valleys with a geological composition of sand, rock, and volcanic ash. The low, bushy, and thorny vegetation that is typical of the region is home to a variety of fauna such as guanaco, foxes, maras (the Patagonian rabbit), and condors.

The day starts at Laguna de Los Juncos, with its unusual rock formations with condor nests above, and with spectacular views looking over the Pichi-Leufu River Valley. At the highest point of the walk, your guide prepares a typical Patagonian lunch. A sustained descent leads to the walk's conclusion, and you return to the hotel in the later afternoon.

You are free this evening to head to a nearby restaurant, or perhaps to stay in and enjoy the hotel's restaurant, which specializes in homemade pastas and wood-fired pizzas.

Hotel Hotel Aldebaran, Bariloche – 3rd of 4 nights

Fri – Nov 21 - DAY 7 of hike

Brazo Tristeza Balcony; 4 hours, 650-ft. elevation gain and descent, easy to moderate; optional afternoon of easy kayaking

Please note: a short section of this walk requires crossing a wooden bridge with a steep drop-off on one side. If you have any concerns about vertigo, we strongly urge you to phone our office. Early risers this morning may wish to take a short walk, following the path down from the hotel to the lakeside dock. Following breakfast, you depart for Bahia Lopez, the start of the day's walk. The route begins near the rocky beach of Nahuel Huapi Lake, along a wide, wooded trail, and continues on a

gradual but steady ascent, flanked by purple mutisia wildflowers. After a short, steep rocky section (**the section that could be uncomfortable for those who have concerns about vertigo**), you are rewarded with outstanding views of the surrounding mountains, including the 12,000-foot, glacier-capped Mount Tronador, an extinct volcano that marks the border between Argentina and Chile. Upon arrival at a natural balcony, carved out of the granite cliffs by glaciers, you relax and enjoy a gourmet lunch prepared high in the mountains— food for the body and spirit. With luck, you may spot giant condors soaring in the wind. Condors are among the largest flying birds in the world, and to see them on the wing is truly a breathtaking sight.

After descending from the loop walk and returning to the hotel, this afternoon a kayaking option is available for those who wish to enjoy the scenery from another vantage point. This easy, guided paddle on Nahuel Huapi Lake is a wonderful way to spend a summer afternoon in Bariloche. The waters are generally calm, and the lake is edged with lush vegetation and diverse wildlife. Others may wish to take the afternoon to relax at the hotel or perhaps enjoy its spa. Another option is to take a taxi to downtown Bariloche for shopping opportunities. Tonight you celebrate your final evening together in true Argentine style at an exclusive private restaurant featuring local organic gourmet cuisine and fine Argentinean wines.

Hotel Hotel Aldebaran, Bariloche – 4th of 4 nights

Sat – Nov 22 - DAY 8 of hike

Following breakfast this morning, you say adios to your newfound friends. Complimentary transfers to the Bariloche Airport are provided throughout the morning, depending on the time of your departing flight.

Transport from Bariloche hotel by Country Walkers representative

10:45am Depart Bariloche BRC San Car Argentina airport via AR#1687
12:48pm Arrive Buenos Aires AEP domestic airport

Taxi or shuttle? Inquire of hotel

Hotel Park Tower – 1 night
 See arrival hotel above.

Sun – Nov 23

10:25pm Depart Buenos Aires EZE via UA#818

Mon – Nov 24

6:00am Arrive Houston IAH for plane change

8:15am Depart Houston IAH via UA#1146
12:40pm Arrive Newark EWR

Participants:

Karen and George Barrowclough of New York, NY

Debra and Rick Cook of Dallas, TX

Ron DeVos of North Haledon, NJ

Daniel Catania of Buenos Aires, guide. *Born in the Argentine capital of Buenos, Daniel earned his guide certificate through Mountain Guides Argentine Assoc. He now makes his home in the Argentinian province of Tierra del Fuego, where he pursues his love of mountaineering, skiing, and photography. As a director and*

instructor for the Andean Club Ushuaia, Daniel naturally shares his love of the Argentine landscape. He brings his knowledge of and passion for his country to our Argentina tour.

HIGH ALTITUDE WARNING

The highest elevation you will be walking at on this tour is approximately 9,000 ft. The altitude may have some effect on travelers. Typical symptoms include nausea, a loss of appetite, insomnia, shortness of breath, dizziness, headaches, or other minor irregularities. There are actions you can take to help you adjust to the altitude, including drinking lots of water (more than you feel you need) and getting plenty of sleep. Also, take your time while walking and allow your body to adjust and always keep your guides informed of how you are feeling. Please discuss with your doctor whether taking altitude medication would be helpful.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

For more than 35 years, CW has been a leader in active travel, with responsible tourism an integral part of our core values. Our tours reflect our dedication to best travel practices—and to the preservation of indigenous cultures and the environment. CW has made a donation on behalf of every traveler to the CWTravelers Fund, which supports designated projects in the communities and habitats in which we travel. We invite you to learn more about our efforts and initiatives for giving back. Here's just one example that highlights our sustainable practices: Cultural Embrace: In Argentina, you deeply embrace the culture, including the country's distinctive cuisine. Sample a traditional asado barbecue of specially cut meats slowly roasted for hours and savor regional wines in Mendoza vineyards with the Andes as a backdrop. And in the Bariloche area of Northern Patagonia, relish decadent chocolate (created following Germanic traditions). Throughout, as part of a small CW group, you *hacer sobre mesa* (linger at the table) in the company of newfound friends.

Tour Facts at a Glance

TOUR LENGTH - 8 days, 7 nights

DEPARTURE DATES - Saturday, November 15, 2014

MEETING POINT - Lares de Chacras Hotel, Mendoza, Argentina, 2:00 p.m.

DEPARTURE POINT - San Carlos de Bariloche Airport, Bariloche, Argentina (BRC)

ACTIVITY LEVEL - This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with an average of 4 to 6 miles per day. While this is not a hiking tour, there are ascents and descents on some walks. Many paths are uneven and rocky and require sure-footedness. One walk is at an elevation over 9,000 feet. Select days on the tour are designed to introduce you to the culture and history of Argentina, including a day at the wineries in Mendoza. There is walking on these days, but it is limited in comparison to full walking days. The guides set a leisurely pace in order to enjoy the vistas, flora, and wildlife. The daily walks are flexible based upon the changing weather patterns and seasonal differences of the regions. The itinerary describes most of the available options.

INCLUSIONS -

- » One expert generalist guide and regional local guides, with you 24/7
- » All meals except for two dinners; local wine or beer included with dinners
- » All accommodations while on tour
- » Transportation from the meeting point to the departure point
- » Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary
- » Basic travel insurance coverage (see Travel Insurance section that follows)
- » The unbeatable and cumulative experience of the CW staff

GRATUITIES - Gratuities for all hotels, meals, and services that are included in your tour price will be paid by CW. Should you wish to tip your CW guide(s), the standard in the industry ranges from \$10 to \$15 per person, per day (or \$20 to \$30 per couple, per day), and can be paid in USD or local currency. Please note that we will have one full-time tour guide who will accompany the entire tour and individual local guides to join in each area we visit.

Traveling To and From Your Tour

MEETING POINT - Lares de Chacras Hotel, Mendoza, Argentina, 2:00 p.m.

Your guide(s) will meet you in the lobby of this hotel and will be wearing a CW shirt. Please be dressed for walking.

MOST CONVENIENT AIRPORT - Mendoza - El Plumerillo Airport (MDZ), Mendoza, Argentina
aa2000.com.ar

Buenos Aires is the most convenient gateway city to reach Mendoza: Ministro Pistarini International Airport (EZE). Buenos Aires, Argentina. Several domestic flights are offered to Mendoza daily. Please be aware that these flights depart from the domestic airport of Buenos Aires, Aeroparque (AEP), which is located downtown, approximately one hour away from the International Airport.

IMPORTANT ENTRY REQUIREMENT - Residents of the U.S. must pay a reciprocity fee of \$160 USD per person prior to arrival to any entry point in Argentina (land, sea, or flight). Unlimited entry for U.S. citizens is allowed for 10 years with this payment. Canadian passport holders will pay \$75 USD for a single entry or \$150 USD for multiple entries. Australian passport holders will pay \$100 USD, valid for 1 year of unlimited entries.

Please go to <https://virtual.provinciapagos.com.ar/ArgentineTaxes/> to pay this fee via credit card. Once the payment is made, an electronic receipt will be generated, which needs to be presented at immigration/passport control upon arrival. Lack of proof of payment could result in denial of entry and consequent return to your departure city by the airline.

GETTING TO THE MEETING POINT - A complimentary transfer from the Mendoza airport to the first hotel will be provided to those guests arriving into Mendoza on the first day of the tour. We recommend you book the 8:00 a.m. flight from Buenos Aires to Mendoza, which will give you plenty of time to get to the hotel and relax prior to the 2:00 p.m. meeting time. Please ensure we have received your flight details at least 30 days in advance of departure date. A representative will be holding a sign with your name on it as you exit the baggage claim area through sliding glass doors into the arrivals hall. If you are joining either the Buenos Aires Pre-Tour Layover or Select Experience, all arrangements will be made on your behalf, including the flight from Buenos Aires to Mendoza and all transfers.

PRE-TOUR ACCOMMODATIONS MADE BY CW - We recommend that you consider arriving in Argentina at least one night in advance of the tour. This will allow you time to rest after your travels and recover from any effects of jet lag as well as to spend time exploring Buenos Aires. CW is pleased to offer two pre-tour options in Buenos Aires: Buenos Aires Layover and Buenos Aires Select (please see "Select Experiences" section).

BUENOS AIRES LAYOVER - This option includes private airport transfers, one pre-tour night at the Loi Suites Recoleta Hotel in Buenos Aires, breakfast, and domestic flight from Buenos Aires to Mendoza. This package is perfect for travelers arriving to Argentina the day before the tour. You will be met upon arrival of your international flight and transferred to the Loi Suites Recoleta. In your room you will find a welcome letter and an e-ticket for your flight to Mendoza. The day is yours to explore on your own or rest. The following morning (the first day of your CW tour), you will be met following breakfast at the Loi Suites Recoleta and transferred to the domestic airport for your flight to Mendoza. Upon arrival in Mendoza, you will be transferred to our first hotel to begin the tour.

Loi Suites Recoleta - Buenos Aires, Argentina Tel 011 54 11 5777 8950 Email recoleta@loisuites.com.ar Loisuites.com.ar/en/recoleta-hotel-buenos-aires/recoleta-hotel-buenos-aires-argentinahome. A deluxe hotel ideally situated in the upscale neighborhood of Recoleta within walking distance of many fine shops, galleries, museums, restaurants, and the Recoleta cemetery. Amenities include a pool, gym, and business center.

DELAYS/LATE ARRIVALS - If you are delayed while traveling, or for any reason miss the scheduled group meeting, please phone our local partner in Argentina, Oyikil Viajes, and leave a message for your guide(s) as to your estimated time of arrival. Since you will likely be traveling on a weekend for this tour, it is not advisable to leave this message at the CW office.

Oyikil Viajes Emergency Numbers - If calling from outside Argentina: 011 54 9 11 6397 8472

If calling from Buenos Aires, Argentina: 15 6397 8472. If calling from within Argentina but outside of Buenos Aires: 011 15 6397 8472 CW at 800-464 9255 or 802 244 1387 during office. After hours: 802 371 0109.

DEPARTURE POINT - San Carlos de Bariloche Airport, Bariloche, Argentina (BRC) aa2000.com.ar. A transfer from the Hotel Aldebaran to the Bariloche airport will be provided based on your departure flight time. All flights from Bariloche arrive into the Jorge Newbery Buenos Aires domestic airport. This airport is commonly referred to as Aeroparque (AEP). If you are connecting to an international flight home, please note that the transfer from Aeroparque to Ezeiza International Airport (EZE) will take approximately one hour. We recommend taking this into consideration when scheduling flights to allow adequate transfer time. Taxi stands are located inside the airport and the fare is approximately \$50 USD (payable in USD or via credit card). If you plan to schedule your return flights immediately following the tour's conclusion, please contact your airline directly for specific check-in requirements.

TRAVEL INSURANCE - All guests automatically receive coverage for \$5,000 in medical expenses, \$50,000 for emergency medical transportation, repatriation of remains coverage, and 24-hour travel assistance services during their tour. This complimentary plan is subject to restrictions and is not intended to replace supplementary travel insurance. For more details, please contact CW or Travel Guard directly at 877.525.2372.

BUENOS AIRES | PRE-TOUR SELECT - Discover a land of gaucho traditions, where the passion of tango music underscores a tour through an alluring Latin American country with European roots. The lively hub city of Buenos Aires enchants as you wander among the colorful homes of the fashionable La Boca neighborhood. The cobblestone streets of San Telmo wind through the very birthplace of tango. At an authentic estancia, or ranch, you are invited to take part in Argentina's textured culture. In this introduction to Argentina, in the city or the country, new and old seem to blend harmoniously every step of the way.

SOUTHERN PATAGONIA | POST-TOUR SELECT - 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 the 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. 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!