



Suzanne's South American Adventure

BUENOS AIRES

We were met at the airport by Paola, our guide, and transferred by coach from the airport to the city (35 km, about 45 minutes drive in non-peak hour, about 1 ½ hours or more in peak). Paola was fantastic and can be requested – she was very informative, passionate about her city & her job, good sense of humour and excellent English.

Exchange rate approx 4 pesos to the USD, but USD completely accepted everywhere so I didn't bother to change my USD into pesos. 9 – 10pm is normal dinner time in Buenos Aires.

It is said that Argentinians are Italians who speak Spanish, dress like the English & think they're French. The city is just now starting to appreciate and renovate their old buildings, and the city is reasonably clean for a city of 12million people. Parks and gardens still a bit run down as they don't have the money to maintain them. Every Thursday, the mothers and grandmothers of the disappeared thousands from the 1970s still walk around the government square with photos of their missing relatives.

Things to do in Buenos Aires

Shopping

- Shoes, leather & luggage excellent buys, www.silviaymario.com is a fabulous leather/cashmere factory outlet walking distance from the hotel. Cashmere sweaters around AUD\$40 - \$80 and leather jackets around AUD\$200.00 – will tailor make. The shops don't open until 10 – 11am, but are open till around 10pm. There was still a large number of shops (and the major shopping centres) open on Sunday.
- Lots of pavement stalls selling pashminas, toys, hats, purses, souvenirs, just about everything you can think of.
- A lot of the streets were one way, so whilst it would take a while to drive around the city centre, it wasn't that far to walk to most places. The streets were well lit & plenty of people around, we felt quite safe walking around the main drag at night .
- New open top bus hop on hop off service from Principal Square to all the major sights
- Saturday markets at the Recoleta – antiques, paintings, jewellery, buskers, the odd hustling gypsy.

The Recoleta Cemetery

- This is where Eva Peron is buried, was really fascinating, all the graves were above ground so each had a small tomb & the place was like a huge city with streets of miniature buildings, the tombs & crypts all with statues or ornate carvings on them. They couldn't bury the dead underground because of the high water table so they all have above ground tombs.

Tango shows – lots of them & they vary!

- Senor Tango one of the best (USD100) with singers, orchestra, dancers, show all in Spanish. Steak, steak, or steak !! (Not much catering for vegos!) 8.30pm – midnight.
- Complet Tango – includes a free tango lesson which was fun, but more geared to Intrepid type market. Show was quite good but Food & wine very average.

Other tours

- Day trip to Uruguay on the ferry recommended. Old style city, cobbled streets
- Full day ranch tour or delta tour to the wetlands.

IGUASSU FALLS

Iguassu Town is about 20km from the Falls. Buses go to the falls every 20 minutes, about a ½ hour trip. Taxis USD20.00 to/from the visitors centre at the falls, then a train into the national park.

The Falls walks were on metal platforms, well maintained, with recycling bins, fabulous views of the various sections of the falls, heaps of beautiful coloured butterflies, birds, & turtles in the water. There was also a huge raccoon type animal walking along the handrail on one of the bridges, so plenty of wildlife for enthusiasts. There is now a small train through to the main falls since the walkway washed away in floods.

The Gran boat tour included a drive through the forest with information on the trees and animals en route. The boat ride under the falls was great fun – not to be missed but you get very wet, most exhilarating!

LIMA

It's about 30 minutes from central Lima to the airport. There isn't a good public transport system in Lima, there is a small private bus system but the traffic is chaotic. The taxis aren't metered, so you have to negotiate and agree on a price. Proper taxis have a round registration form on the dash board. Tourists are recommended to get a driver for the day & get taxi from hotel or restaurant, don't hail one on the street as it's not safe. *Our tour guide carries a nylon string in her handbag in case the tax driver goes off track (to strangle him!). She covers her gold bangles when out in town.* The best areas are Miraflores and San Isidro.

Local municipal police and private security policy are everywhere downtown. There was an armoured truck mounted with water cannon on the corner of the main square, with police with riot shields. They are there every day to control any crowds or beginning of demonstrations. There used to be 1400 demonstrations a year before they patrolled the main square in this way, but you did feel very safe in this area. The riot police were very friendly and posed for photographs!

The Museo Larco Herrero has the finest gold and silver collection from ancient Peru and is in the Miraflores area. The National Archeological Museum is also good. The cathedral was lovely and included interesting catacombs with the interred bodies of all the old priests. The public buildings were beautiful colonial Spanish style. Good seafood restaurants in the Miraflores waterfront area.

CUZCO TO THE SACRED VALLEY

Cuzco is 3200 metres above sea level. We all felt a bit light headed, sort of a jetlagged feeling, and a bit nauseous. For mild altitude sickness, they recommend eating pasta, as it's easy to digest, having very little alcohol and lots of Gatorade to replace salts. Coca tea, a local drink, is good for raised blood pressure. Bananas are also good but I can't remember why. Mild symptoms also included heart palpitations & dizziness & breathlessness.

Lake Titicaca is 7 hours from Cuzco by bus or 11 hours by train.

Upon arrival in Cuzco (interesting landing approach between all the hills, with lots of circles coming down!) we drove straight out of town to the Sacred Valley, which is a lower altitude than Cuzco.

Pisac markets are about 45 minutes from the Aranwa resort. Quite interesting with local produce as well as jewellery, clothes, souvenirs, lots of it was a bit cheap and trashy.

The ½ day tour of Cuzco is good to get your bearings, it's such a picturesque city with lots to do, the cathedral quite spectacular, and the Spanish buildings and Incan ruins very interesting. Plenty of good shopping for jewellery and alpaca /wool products.

MACCHU PICCHU

The Macchu Picchu town consists of approx 4 or 5 blocks, plenty of bars, shops, cafes, restaurants, massage, (USD15 for ½ hour massage!) The town was reasonably clean, & is undergoing a building boom.

The buses leave for the Macchu Picchu ruins as soon as they are full of passengers, so about every 10 – 15 minutes the buses depart. The road was gravel, had hairpin bends and was very steep. The bus drivers were pretty fast and a window seat was not for the faint hearted. It takes about 20 minutes to drive up from the town to the ruins. Entry to the ruins was very well organized, with a bag check booth, bar close by and clean toilets.

We didn't go to the ruins for sunrise, as the previous days had been wet and we weren't expecting good weather. The ruins were amazing, well restored, the Andes surrounding them misty and spectacular, a

fantastic place, and the history of the Incas was really interesting. The tour group crowds were there for the morning, then everyone disappeared around 11.30am when it became quite hot, but a group of us hiked 5 km or so up the hill along the Inca trail for some fabulous views of the ruins. Some of the Inca trail trekkers who had done the whole walk were a bit over it all, as they had had snow, thunder storms and rain along the track. You need sun screen hat, water, layered clothing and good walking shoes for Macchu Picchu, as the temperature becomes quite hot during the day.

DON'T FORGET!

Remember your yellow fever vaccinations before you head to South America - if you don't , you get jabbed at Sydney airport!

CONTACT US

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